Emperor of Kashmir
Lalitaditya the Great

Sanjay Sonawani

Translated from the original Marathi version by
Prashant Talnikar

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Translator's Word

Translation of any book is a responsible job. A golden rule in translation is 'Never add anything and never subtract anything,' yet in the case of novels and fictional stories, the translator has much leeway in terms of the choice of words. They can also take certain liberties with the language or phrasing when translating sensitive or bold passages in order to soften them for the readers according to the prevalent social norms. History or the books on it do not allow this. They are, therefore, very tricky at times and very simple at others. Tricky because there are texts or words that may attack your own sensitivities or contradict your beliefs and simple because you just have to go along the original writer word by word unquestioningly. In the latter case, you are effectively a mere conduit and the onus of justifying the statements, conclusions, observations and inferences lies with the original author. This book being a book of history, translating it proved to be instructive in this sense.

It is a wonderful and informative book for a student of history. The hero of this book Emperor Lalitaditya is hardly known to Indians, which is quite surprising given his status as one of the great emperors in the history. It is a food for thought. There would be, indeed there should be, more books written on Lalitaditya in future, some of which may go with or against the opinions or inferences drawn in this book. That is the way history reaches the masses, especially the future generations. There is nothing right or wrong about any history; it just is. Scholars like Sanjay Sonawani come forward in every era to interpret and reinterpret it based on the available evidence and present their views. This book is especially important in this sense because it shall always be the first on Lalitaditya.Hence, it is a commendable work. I am happy to be associated with it, thanks to Sanjay Sonawani and Sanjay Nahar.

I hope the casual readers as well as the students of history welcome this book as the first ever document on an exemplary king of Kashmir, of India and of the entire Southeast Asia. It is truly historic and well researched book because it throws light not only on the life of Lalitaditya but also on the whole gamut of the politics, diplomacy, social milieu, geography and the chronology of events of medieval India.

Prashant Talnikar

Inner Voice

Like everybody else, I have always been greatly influenced by the names and valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Shahid Bhagat Singh – Rajguru – Sukhdev, Guru Gobind Singh and Rana Pratap. As I started my work with the people of border regions of the country, however, I was gradually introduced to personalities like Banda Bahadur, Lachit Borphuken, Zorawar Singh, Sant Sankardev, sant-poet Lalleshwari or Lal Ded, Kashmiri Emperor Lalitaditya, etc and their great works. My initial knowledge about them was limited to things like their armed conflicts, their rebelliousness, their victories and defeats and how they dedicated their lives to the cause of social unity.

Over the period as I studied them, delving deeper into their lives and times, I realised how extraordinary these souls were in the context of the social and political situations of the times they were born in and the paucity of resources at their disposal to fight with their circumstances. Yet, they emerged victorious! I further realised that we, especially the children, need to know these beacons of our society in the past. We need to learn from what as a society we did (did not do), to preserve our unity then, and then try to chart an appropriate course now in that light. Also, this brought home to me the fact that the basic principles of their teachings are just as relevant in today's social milieu as they were then. All these observations and deliberations led me to take up this project of reviving the shining examples from our history, lest they are forgotten forever. The eighth century Kashmiri emperor Lalitaditya is one such shining light from our collective past.

Lalitaditya not only conquered the northwest Indian territories to expand his kingdom, he, in fact, built an empire that included large parts of the central and eastern India. He even crossed the mighty Himalayas in the north to establish his supremacy in the region. Lalitaditya created a great city called Parihaspur and constructed the historic Martand Mandir. He went on to construct countless temples and Buddhist stupas during his reign all over his empire. The remains of these great edifices can be seen even today, reminding us of their grandeur in their times.
Sarhad began organising lectures in the name of this great and benevolent king, Lalitaditya, in 2001 in Pune. Sadly, however, even historians didnot know about this emperor. Then I met Sanjay Sonawani, a journalist, publisher and a leading

historian in Maharashtra. We were meeting after a long gap. Way back in 1997, he had published my books *Udhvasta Kashmir* and *Dashmesh*. He even set up an industry in the Naxal-infested district of Gadchiroli against all odds, with the objective of providing livelihood to the tribals in this area. Then he tried hard to set up a fruit pulp processing factory in Kashmir to offer the Kashmiri youthsemployment opportunities. Both these projects ultimately fizzled out for different reasons, but the thought counted. They also demonstrated how dedicated Sanjay Sonawani can be when he takes up something. When I told him about Lalitaditya and the need to write a well-researched bookon him, he promptly took up the challenge and this book came into existence.

Sanjay checked and studied references from hundreds of books and researched the historical information critically before deriving his conclusions and forming his opinions. This book is perhaps the first on this subject in the world.
While publishing this book gives enormous satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment of one's duty, there is also a hope, albeit naive, that the book can help find a solution to the complex Kashmir issue through its revelations that Kashmir has been inextricably linked with the rest of India for millennia and had a strong presence on the world map centuries ago. We hope the reader will find this as-yet-unknown piece of glorious history of India interesting and informative.

Sanjay Nahar
Founder-President
Sarhad

Foreword

A specific provision in the Constitution of India had granted the special status to Kashmir,which was recently abrogated.The state is now divided into two Union Territories, thus making it finally an integral part of India. What will be the future of the people of bifurcated Kashmir depends on the times and the future course of the events. Still, the issue will remain in the political domain as a matter of controversy, which I hope would be resolved in favour of the Kashmiri people. Sadly, one cannot emphatically say that there is a great deal of emotional exchange between Kashmir and the rest of the country. The chief reason for this is that historians, both past and present, have failed to connect the history of Kashmir to that of India in an effective manner. What was needed was to merely put their connection forward clearly and make it a part of the composite written history of the country.

The use of the word 'merely' in the above statement may sound as oversimplification, for as a historian, you need courage to swim against the tide and think as well as write differently. You need to be bold enough to take on the opponents of the idea. Sanjay Sonawani is one such courageous, bold historian. His book on Kashmiri Emperor Lalitaditya is precisely the document that attempts to bridge the two histories, hence it is important.

Having said that, I must say you need an equally courageous publisher to publish such a pathbreaking book.Sanjay Nahar deserves compliments to show this ideological, and of course, financial courage. In that sense, this book by Sanjay Sonawani is lucky.

Sanjay Nahar isnot a conventional, commercial publisher. His Chinar Publishers is not exactly a money-making enterprise. It is an organisation that is devoted to a specific cause and as such, looks beyond the accounting books for its profits and losses. Chinar's efforts are directed towards the unity of India and making India a nation. To achieve this, it is essential to bring into mainstream the communities and regions that are, for some reason, out of it and to make those in the mainstream realise that without these 'outside' communities and regions, the mainstream isnot really the mainstream. Sarhad, the parent organisation of Chinar Publishers is striving to make that happen.

The connection between Kashmir and Maharashtra is quite ancient. Sant Dnyaneshwar's philosophy was influenced by the Nath Panth, which, in turn, carried the influence of Acharya Abhinavgupta, the 10thcentury philosopher from Kashmir. Abhinavgupta is regarded as one of the early exponents of Kashmiri Shaivism.However, well known researcher-scholar Dr RC Dhere has claimed that the flow of Kashmiri Shaivism itself had found its course in Maharashtra, atTryambakeshwar. It was on the Brahmagiri Mountain near Tryambakeshwar that

Nivruttinath was initiated into the Nath philosophy from Gahininath.He laterinitiated his younger brother Sant Dnyaneshwar into it. This, in effect, means that the Pratyabhijna Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir as well as the Nath Shaiva philosophy - and thereby the Warkari philosophy – ofMaharashtra share their lineage.

Of course, irrespective of this philosophical link, the Yadavas of Devgiri, the rulers of the region contemporary to Sant Dnyaneshwar, had in their court a Kashmiri Pandit named Sharang Dev, whose two generations had served the kingdom of the Yadavas. Sharang Dev wrote *Sangeet Ratnakar*, a book that is still regarded as a standard text on the Indian Classical music. The philosophical structure and terminology of the book are that of the Kashmiri Shavism.

One is aware that this book by Sonawani falls into the category of biography and/or history. However, the discussion on the philosophy is essentially aimed at underscoring the link between Maharashtra and Kashmir. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's family was a Kashmiri Pandit family. His brother-in-law (sister Vijayalaxmi's husband) Ranjit Pandit was a Maharashtrian.He had translated *Rajatarangini*, the historical book by one of the earliest known historian, KalhanaPandit, into English. Interestingly, Sanjay Nahar has recently published the Marathi translation of *Rajatarangini*. Thereby,he further strengthened the relationship between Maharashtra and Kashmir. Veteran Marathi writer Dr Aruna Dhere and Prashant Talnikar have translated the book. Chinar Publishers has further published *Rajatarangini* by Jonaraja, the book that follows the tradition of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and records the lives and times of the later kings of Kashmir, along with the informative footnotes.

This book on Lalitaditya by Sanjay Sonawani is a part of the process, I am confident, will carry on in future as well. If this biography of the Kashmiri emperor is translated into other Indian languages, Kashmir's historical relationship with India as a whole will be revealed across the country. Considering that there is a dire need for such a realisation in the present times, there can be no doubt that this is a great nationalistic work.

It can be concluded from the history as written by Kalhana, and the *Nilamata Purana* that predates his *Rajatarangini*, that the history of Kashmir is closely linked with that of India since the Great War of Mahabharata. Magadha ruler Jarasandha was related to King Gonanda I of Kashmir. After the death of Damodara, the son of Gonanda, Lord Krishna had himself enthroned his young wife Yashomati. The next major and famous dynasty, which succeededthe Gonandiya dynasty,to rule Kashmir for a long time was the Karkotas. The most famous king Muktapida aka Lalitaditya, whobelonged to the Karkota dynasty, is the central character of Sonawani's book. The book appropriately starts with the description of the Karkota dynasty. According to the puranas, Karkota or Karkotaka was a Naga family. Sonawani has tried to

understand the history of this family as well. In doing so, he had to perforce touch upon the Varna and the caste system of ancient India, the issue of the Aryas and the non-Aryas, the exact link between Sanskrit and Prakrit languages, etc. All of these subjects are potentially controversial.There have been, and indeed there will be, more debates on them (e.g. etymology of the word 'Sudra' put forth by Shankaracharya in *Brahmasutrabhashya*). Sonawani's opinions and observations, in this respect, are so important that they cannot be glossed over. The term 'Ekang' can serve as a good example of this. There was an influential group of professionals by that name in Kashmir. The concept behind the term and its meaning is found at many places, including the abhangas of Sant Tukaram, where he has used the term 'Ekang Veer' to decoratively describe the Vaishnavas.

The first king of the Karkota dynasty, Durlabhvardhana aka Pradnyaditya was a contemporary of King Harshavardhan of the Kanauj. Sonawani doesnot accept the opinion of various scholars that Durlabhvardhana was a vassal king of Harshavardhan. Durlabhvardhana was succeeded to the throne by his son Pratapaditya, who begot three sons, namely Chandrapida, Tarapida and Muktapida (Lalitaditya). After Pratapaditya, the eldest Chandrapida came to power. It was during his time that the Arab invasions of India started from the northwest. During that period, Muhammad bin Qasim defeated king of Sindh, Dahir, and usurped his kingdom.

This invasion of Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim reverberated in the history of medieval India for a long time but most historians focused their efforts on just these two powers. Sonawani dares to push the horizon of history to include the contemporary Chinese and Tibetan rulers into it. At the same time, he doesnot overlook the small and big rulers in the northwest as well. When Qasim defeated Dahir, the latter's son, Jayasimha, took shelter with Chandrapida in Kashmir, Sonawani points out. (Later, Jayasimha returned to Sindh and converted to Islam.He somehow managed to retain his kingdom but that is another slice of history altogether). Of course, like Sonawani has shown, Chandrapida's achievements werenot limited to offering shelter to Jayasimha. In fact, he was a leading player among the Hindu and Buddhist rulers around Kashmir, who had come together to repel the Arab invasions. It is said that thanks to this united front, Qasim was held off at Multan (now in Pakistan). Chandrapida had even invited the Emperor of China to join this front, as Sonawani states citing Chinese documents. It seems logical because the Arab invaders were a threat to the trade route that was so crucial for the Chinese interests. Even the ruler of Tibet wanted to control this route.Chandrapida helped the Chinese Emperor by sending his troops and supplies.

Militarily, Kashmir appears to have been at the centre of this entire power struggle. There was China, an ambitiously aggressive Tibet, smaller kingdoms in the northwest region, the Arab invaders and in the south, there was the powerful

kingdom of Kanauj making up the whole canvas. From Sonawani's observations, it can be said with fair bit of certainty that the Karkota kings of Kashmir had realised the strategic importance of their kingdom. They had developed a political strategy based on it. They even succeeded in their endeavour spectacularly. Eventually, Muhammad bin Qasim did reach Jalandhar near the border between Kashmir and today's Punjab.But owing to a strong resistancefrom Chandrapida, he was forced to abandon his Kashmir adventure and turn towards Kangda (in today's Himachal Pradesh). Obviously, Sonawani has based his propositions on the Arabian sources. When he says that Chandrapida may have thought of joining hands with Kanauj king Yashovarman, precisely to keep the Arab invaders at bay, sounds quite plausible.

Unfortunately, Tarapida, the brother of Chandrapida turned out to be a devious and treacherous character. He plotted and killed Chandrapida and ascended the throne. Nevertheless, he continued with his brother's policy in foreign affairs and helped China in the Sino-Tibetan conflict.

Sanjay Sonawani counters the opinion of historian Tansen Sen and differs with the philosophy of writing history with the preconceived notion of China being a superpower in those days. He also disagrees with Kalhanafor the latter's vilification of Tarapida in his *Rajatarangini*. He cites certain Chinese and Tibetan evidence, besides several logical grounds, in support of his position.

Tarapida himself died suddenly and mysteriously. The hero of this book Lalitaditya then ascended the throne in Kashmir. Sonawani claims this year to be 724-25 AD. In doing so, he contests the proposition of the noted Sanskrit scholar and the editor of *Gaudavaho*of the 19thcentury, Shankar Pandurang Pandit, who had deduced the year to be circa 695 AD. Coincidentally, Shankar Pandit was the paternal uncle of Ranjit Pandit, the English translator of *Rajatarangini*. Shankar Pandit had edited *Gaudavaho* by Vakpati, a Prakrit collection of verses. He has said in the preface that King Lalitaditya came to power in 695 AD. Shankar Pandit appears to have disregarded the entries in the Chinese royal court in this respect in favour of Kalhana's chronology of the kings. Sonawani, on the other hand, relies more on the Chinese records, which statethat Chandrapida was in power at least till 720 AD with the intervening 4-5 years being accounted for by Tarapida's rule. Instead of relying wholly on Kalhana, he further goes on to suggest that, based on other evidence from the period not just Lalitaditya's time, the entire chronology of the Karkota dynasty needs to be rewritten. Needless to say, his book is a first step in that direction.

After Muhammad bin Qasim, the Caliph of Baghdad appointed an officer named Junayd al-Murri as the governor of Sindh. Junayd al-Murri started demanding obeisance money from the nearby rulers. Lalitaditya, on assuming power in Kashmir, made it the first task to attack Junayd al-Murri and by defeating him, put an end to the obeisance. Sonawani is disappointed that historians didnot take as much

cognisance of this fact as it deserved. In such cases, the Arab historians take recourse to merely mentioning that a conflict took place and cleverly omit the outcome. Sonawani says that this only conveys their tacit acceptance of the defeat of the concerned invader or ruler. From this, one observes that Sonawani is setting certain standards for historiography (Comrade Sharad Patil had attempted this earlier). His comment "Besides, when I saw what happened next, I knew how to fill these gaps to complete the history" is eloquent enough in this respect. After his defeat, the Caliph recalled Junayd al-Murri and appointed another governor in his place: Tamim. Sonawani claims that Lalitaditya joined hands with Yashovarman, the king of Kanauj, and thwarted the Arabs successfully. Devoid of success, Tamim ran away and his successor Al Hakam also faced a series of defeats.

The combination of Lalitaditya and Yashovarman then went on to attack Tibet and free the five important trade routes captured by it, thereby checking the aggressive imperiousness of Tibet. This fact is mentioned in a letter sent by Lalitaditya to the Chinese Emperor through a delegation. The Chinese Emperor had acknowledged the sovereignty of Lalitaditya. Historian Tansen Sen interpreted this to callLalitadityaa vassal king of China.Sonawani rejects the interpretation.

Another significant event that Sonawani draws attention to is about the victory of King Muttai over the Turks, which the Kashmiris celebrated annually. Iranian scholar Al-Biruni has mentioned this annual festival in his book *Kitab al-Hind*. This reference is clearly about Kashmiri Emperor Muktapida, i.e.Lalitaditya and alludes to his victory over Tokharistan.

Sonawani's remark, in this regard, is true. He says, "The history is completely and astonishingly silent about the medieval period."

The readers would certainly feel that Sonawani has compelled our history to speak up by juxtaposing it with the Arab, Chinese and Tibetan sources. One expects his book will help push back the China-centric writing and develop a Kashmir-centric approach instead.

Though Lalitaditya and Yashovarman came together to conquer the Arabs and Tibet.Tough they were quite successful in it, they soonfell apart. The result being Yashovarman getting defeated and being forced to accept the supremacy of Kashmir. Sanjay Sonawani has described this part of the history using books, including *Gaudavaho*, treatise such as *Prabhavakcharitra*, *Prabandha Kosh* and *Bappabhatti Sucharite*.

After the defeat of Yashovarman, the Kashmiri kingdom of Lalitaditya became the largest empire in India, Sonawani points out. It means Lalitaditya needs to be counted among the great Indian emperors such as Chandragupta, Ashoka, Vikramaditya and Harsha.

According to Kalhana, Lalitaditya in his later years had conquered kingdoms on all four corners of India, besides, of course, the kingdoms in the northwestern India

(known as Uttarapath then). He thus became an all-conquering emperor. While Sonawani has cited the information provided by Kalhana, he doesnot insist that it should be taken literally. Rather, he agrees with Kalhana's critics that there is a fair amount of symbolism and exaggeration in Kalhana's descriptions. Even by this logic and after discounting up to 75 percent part of Kalhana's descriptions, one can definitely say that Lalitaditya was the last emperor of his kind. For this reason, Sanjay Sonawani makes a statement: "Not only did Lalitaditya drive the Arab invaders away from India, he also successfully prevented the then powerful Tibet from extending its influence to India. This, by far, was an outstanding achievement on his part. Looking at the stupendous success of Lalitaditya even in the times of global political turmoil, he is easily the second great emperor India has produced after Emperor Ashoka." One cannot but agree with him completely.

Emperor Lalitaditya was a great warrior and a shrewd politician but his excellence as an administrator is equally significant. He took care of his subjects well. He practised secularism in that he never discriminated among the various faiths his subjects followed. He was a great creator and built many great temples, stupas and cities all over Kashmir. The Martand Mandir at Mattan, though in ruins today, stands testimony to his important creations. Sonawani has taken appropriate cognisance of his work. He also rightfully terms the Lalitaditya reignas the 'Golden Era'.

I wish to point out once again that this book, written by Sanjay Sonawani and published by Sanjay Nahar, underscores the fact that Kashmir was by all means a part of the Indian mainstream. My sincere good wishes for the book.

Dr Sadanand More
Chairman,
Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya ani Sanskruti Mandal

Preface

Crowded with mixed feelings, I am presenting this historical book *Emperor of Kashmir, Lalitaditya the Great*. As a researcher, I feel proud that this is the very first book ever written on this extraordinary emperor from the 8thcentury.But I am sadly surprised that this part of the history was never brought to light in its entirety earlier by anyone. It is true that barring Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the available information about Lalitaditya is sketchy and far too scattered. Where it is not quite clear, it became imperative to delve deeper into other contemporary sources and join the bits and pieces to make it meaningful. The task before me was cut out: I had to comb the contemporary histories and accounts of the kings and kingdoms from Turkey, Afghanistan, Arabia, Tibet, China and, of course, India. It was a task that was daunting but not impossible; however, not done so far. Lalitaditya remained confined to some sporadic articles or at best a small chapter in some book on Kashmir. His life and times were never compiled and put forth to the readers in any meaningful way. This may have been due to a general disinterest in the history or a mental slackness.But the result was that Lalitaditya remained largely unknown to the masses because his glorious history was never served to them. I am not a fatalist but I often surmise if I was destined to undertake this task. Hence, the mixed feelings…

But why go that far.Being a student of history, I had never heard of Lalitaditya myself! The credit of introducing me to the hero of this book goes to my friend Sanjay Nahar, who is the Founder of NGO Sarhad.He is a man on a mission.He has endlessnationalistic ideas and makes relentless efforts to bring them into reality.He prompted me to write this book. After he introduced me to Lalitaditya, for a long time, I did little else than search information on the great king. I scanned, scoured and ran after hundreds of books. From among them, I zeroed in on about a hundred, which I thought would be useful for me. It is another story that I had to struggle hard to decide between many contradictory pieces of information and claims in these books. So much so that I ended up reorganising, synchronising the timeline of many events in Lalitaditya's life as well as those in the life of his contemporary king Yashovarman, as recorded in various books.

By far the only writer in medieval India with an eye for historiography was Pandit Kalhana. He preserved Lalitaditya's life in his *Rajatarangini,* albeit with some anachronism. It didnot help as Kalhana's writing is decorative, besides being in verse and replete with myths and legends. Sanjay Nahar kept me enthused whenever I gave in to mental fatigue in working my way through the maze described above. I owe the completion of this book entirely to him.

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As already described, there were many issues to deal with and not the least of them was deciding the exact time of Lalitaditya. Sir Marc Aurel Stein, who was the first to translate Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* into English in the late 19th century, proposes it to be 699 to 735 AD, whereas Shankar Panditputs it as 695 to 731 AD. Writingswith this timeframe as the base couldnot have sustained historically. Later, taking into consideration the records of the royal court of contemporary China, Lalitaditya's tenure was fixed by scholars to be between 724 and 760-761. Since this period was vastly different from that propounded by Stein and Pandit, those who tried to write Lalitaditya's history couldnot match the events and their proposed dates. Most historians apparently took the easy way out and either omitted many events altogether or made grave errors in their chronology. The difference was no less than 25-29 years.

Naturally, the entire reconstructionof the Karkota dynasty in general, and Lalitaditya in particular, was flawed. In short, whatever little has been written about Lalitaditya is mired in ambiguity. It necessitated untangling the different threads and reorganising them logically. I even had to, to the best of my ability, sort out the confusion resulting from either misinterpretation of contemporary evidence or missing its significance completely on the part of the earlier writers. Hermann Goetz and Tansen Sen are two renowned historians. I owe a lot of information in this book to their works.Yet, at times, I was compelled to contradict their conclusions. The same was true with Vakpati and Kalhana because careful perusal of their texts brought to the fore several discrepancies in their narratives, which I thought it better to resync with the facts discerned from other sources. I actually turned into an investigator during the planning of this book because finding corroboration for minuscule bits of information was akin to finding a needle in a haystack. Nonetheless, I thoroughly enjoyed this phase. Not just because I was about to write the true account of a largely unknown emperor but because I was reviving a period that was lost to the history.Also, because I was bringing to light many significant events of that period, which are as yet unknown to anyone. Whether I am successful in my endeavour or not, isnot important; what is important is that this book would be of avail to researchers in future.

The Karkotaka dynasty and Lalitaditya the Great is a high point in the Indian history.I hope their significance will be understood by everyone sooner or later. The history of Lalitaditya is the history of Asiabecause he had ruled a large part of the continent.I sincerely wish that this historical truth comes to the fore in the world. While I certainly expect that this book can bring about a change in the outlook of historians and students of history of Kashmir, I would be happy if the very suppositions that have so far influenced the history writing change.

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Kashmir has a long history but given its geographical set-up and its inclement climate, it is not easy to find and unearth many ancient relics here. However, the relics found in the excavations at Burzahom show that Kashmir had human settlements 3,000 years before the Christian era. The excavations revealed some of the 'pit dwellings'which are nothing but mud-plastered deep trenches or holes in the earth. They would be covered with tree leaves from the top. Their dwellers were using tools made of stones and bones for their routine chores. These types of homes have been found all over the world, including Maharashtra. In Kashmir, evidence of early human settlement has been found at Pandrethan, Gopadri Hill or Takht-i-Suleiman, Rangil, etc. These relics throw light on the civilisation, lifestyle and the art of the ancient Kashmiris. Many more such relics may exist waiting to be unearthed.

The point is that Kashmir has been inhabited by man since ages. The particular people that lived here evolved and developed their own independent culture and their language, apparently influenced by the climatic and geological conditions of the region. Unfortunately, in the 18thcentury, historians adopted certain unscientific racial theories to understand the human origins, languages and cultures across the world.These theories became the basis of what we know about our ancient history and evolution of our cultures.

One of the main theories among them is the concept of the Aryan race and their invasions. According to this popular and highly debated theory, the Aryans were the blue-eyed, golden haired, tall, well-built and fair complexioned people, who advanced on their chariots from some unknown, still-debated place of origin to India and elsewhere, including Europe... They subdued the native tribes and communities in these regions and imposed their own culture and language on them. Earlier, this phenomenon was popularly known as the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) but after Hitler's mass annihilation of people, the European world changed its terminology to the Proto-Indo-European language-speaking people's dispersal in waves or invasion theory from some yet-unknown and inconclusiveplace. In short,the AIT theory with a changed terminology and its implications remained the same. It is claimed that with the spread of these people, their language also spread far and wide. Wherever they went and settled, the natives of those places were culturally and linguistically less evolved.So, these Indo-Europeans prevailed on them in both these fields. That, in short, is what this theory is about. When these people speaking the Indo-European language came to India, they dispersed all over North India. Under their influence, the local languages virtually disappeared. As the natives couldnot master the 'new' language, Sanskrit, their versions of Sanskrit

became the Middle Indo European i.e. Prakrit languages. This means, essentially, all the Prakrit languages were deemed to have born out of Sanskrit. However, this theory was merely an estimation, a proposition. There was no evidence to substantiate it. The horse training manual of Kikkuli, circa 14thcentury BC and some of the names as well as terms from the Bogazkoy Treaty belonging to the same era were presented as the proof of Sanskrit's pre-existence. But, for example,'Satta' and 'Indara', the prakritic terms for Sanskrit 'Sapt' and 'Indra', along with many others, seem to be invariably used in this most ancient attested treaty.The bookwas written in Hurrian language. It is quite evident that those nouns and numeric terms are Prakrit and not Sanskrit as being claimed.

The truth is that Sanskrit as a language has gradually evolved from Prakrit between third century BC and second century CE. I have discussed in detail about this in my Marathi book *Bhasheche Mool* (The Origin of Language).

Essentially, the message of the theory of the Indo-European language group was no different than that of the Aryan Invasion theory. This theory helped certain sections of society, including Europeans to establish their cultural supremacy.However, more than that, since the history was also written on its basis, the basic framework of history changed as well. Kashmir was no exception. With the latest advancements in the science of genetics, the notion that the Indo-European languages spread because of the demographic movement of a specific people itself has become untenable.

A culture is an express form of the evolution of the peculiar way the people living in a particular environmental and geological set-up.It essentially affects the regional general, cultural psychologies, which ultimately reflects in their language, its grammar, its pronunciation patterns and its method of expression. The languages in regions with similar geological construction evince similarities in some way or the other. If anything, such similar languages should be collectively called a group of languages. One cannot summarily link spread of language to movement of people.

Besides, even though an exchange of words and terms is inevitable when two different sets of people come into contact with each other, it does not happen without the acculturation of them on the part of the receiving people. The Indo-European language theory credits a particular set of the people with the creation of a particular language.Thereby, it assumes that the said language spread with the migration of that people. This theory of 'Language Family' has its roots in the superiority complex. The statement that all the languages in India were affected due to the advent of the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian language-speaking people affronts the linguistic creativity of the people in those regions as much as it goes against the etymology of the languages.

Moreover, simply on the basis of a few similar sounding words and some similarity in the construction of sentences, the fatherhood of an independent language such as Kashmiri or Koshur has been given to a proto Indo-European/Iranian language (which doesnot even exist today), which has become the major obstacle in it being declared a classical language.One hopes that at least now the historians discard the theory of migration of a specific type of people speaking the proto Indo-European languages, or the Aryan Invasion and rewrite or reconstruct the human history. For this same reason, there is a need to look at the ancient history of Kashmir differently as well.

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Another popular misconception is that the Indian society has been observing the Vedic Varna system since their advent and political or cultural victory in India. Though the theory took many convenient shapes, the final conclusion of the theory remained the same. The belief is so deep rooted that the Indian historians have been very prompt to put every ruling dynasty in one or the other Varna class (even if there is no express mention of it anywhere). Even the social history of India has been besieged by this Varna theory. There is no doubt that this is the result of the influence of the theory of the Aryan race and the Vedic theology. Unfortunately, the Indian social history has become the inadvertent victim of it.It connotes that the natives of this land accepted the Varna system of the Aryans without posing any resistance.They didnot have their own developed religion.They didnot have their own social systems. In short, through this theory, there has been a relentless effort to prove the Vedic Aryans superior.However, no scholar ever tried to find what the actual social realities were and whether the Varna order and restrictions imposed by the Vedic theology were blindly followed by pre-Vedic indigenous inhabitants of the country. This misconception has deeply rooted in the Indian society while the facts are otherwise.

One more misconception is that the caste system was a product of the Varna system.This was always cast in stone. The fact is, since the pre-Vedic Sindhu civilisation, two socio-religious cultures, namely Hindu (materialistic, Agamic/Tantric) and Saman (spiritual/yogic) coexisted in India, independent of each other.They are so even today. People belonging or converted to the Vedic religion also maintained their separate religious identity, which is clear from the Vedic theology aswell. The historians in the past have simply glossed over this reality. The Vedic religion wasnot born in the Indian subcontinent, but was brought by its few followers to India around 1200 BC.It spread through conversions till about the third century AD. The spiritual, ritualistic and social form of this religion

is completely different from the native religions and social systems in India. However, the use of words 'Varna' and 'Jati' were treated synonymously by the western scholars and translated both terms as 'Caste', which createdhavoc. In reality, the Varnas and the Jatis are two different systems belonging to two different religions having different histories.However, this fact was ignored. In my book *Jatisansthecha Itihas* (The History of Caste System),I have shed light on this part of the history and disproved the traditional concepts.

Some historians have used a strange theory in their writing, which is; the entire Indian society followed the rules of the Vedic religion and accepted the changes in religious commands issued from time to time without any resistance. In doing so, they have not even bothered to check the social and economic history or the veracity of this claim. The casualty of this was history. These historians spent a lot of their time and energy in proving how every ruling dynasty in the country belonged to one or the other Varna. It would be unfair to think that none of them had realised their folly, but they chose to be happy to toe the line anyway. Many unscientific theories were also born about the origin of the caste system, leading to the social conflicts on caste lines in India. We have not been able to put them to rest till now because of these theories. Many believe that history has been written from the angle of a particular religion. The attempts to 'fit-in' the ancient history of Kashmir into this Vedic/Varna bracket, in spite of the fact that the social system prevalent there was completely different and indigenous, was a part of this scheme. The failure to understand the Kashmiri psyche and its social expression has its roots in this phenomenon.

* * *

It is no coincidence that *Brihat Katha* by Gunadhya was written in Koshur (Paishachi) and was translated in Kashmir. Somdev and Kshemendra, the two translators of *Brihat Katha* were Kashmiris. World famous *Brihat Katha*, with its brilliant stories, has been written in this language circa first or second century CE, which means that the language was developed enough from the literature point of view. Though the original manuscript of the book is not available today, itis clear that the literary tradition of Koshur dates long back. Even the Sanskrit translations of *Brihat Katha* were done in Kashmir because the language was understood only in that region and not by outsiders.

Over the period, just as the Kashmiris came into contact with the Darads and the Kamboj people, they also came in contact with the people speaking Persian and Arabic in later times as well. Through this contact, many words from these other languages diffused into Kashmiri while the Kashmiri words found place in the other neighbouring languages, albeit with different intonations. Exchange between

languages is a universal and perpetual process. Scholars of the subject have proved that even the language in the Rigveda shows an influence of many Prakrit words and the Prakrit grammar, including Old Persian. J Bloch has recorded several important observations in his 1914 book *Formation of Marathi Language*. They are as follows –

The ancient editors of the Rigveda have constructed the specific language of the book by learning many dialects or borrowing from them (pp 2). Many Prakrit constructs have found their way into Sanskrit. Sanskrit is a mixed language and not an independent language (pp 48).

It is clear from this fact that Vedic Sanskrit and the latter-day Sanskrit have evolved from the ancient Indian language Prakrit and the ancient Persian language Avestan, with simplification of their words.For example, from Avestan language 'Ahura' became 'Asura', 'Mithra' became 'Mitra' and so on. Likewise, the original Prakrit terms Inda (Indra) and Vunda (Vrunda) appear in the Rigveda. The remnants of many Prakrit grammatical forms are left untouched by the editors of the Rigveda such as the word 'devasah' (to the God) comes as 'devaha' and 'satyasah' (to the truth) comes as 'satyaha', etc. The language of the Rigveda is truly a mixture of Prakrit andAvestan. According to a study, six percent words appearing in the Rigveda have been borrowed from the Dravida and the Munda languages. Taking all this into consideration, to call Sanskrit the mother of all Indo-European languages is sheer ignorance.

This discussion also means that any language undergoes certain changes as per the circumstances and the need but its basic structure doesnot change.It is this unchangeable structure of a language that proves its classic status. The Kashmiri (Koshur) language is known by two other names, Paishachi and Bhoot Bhasha (Both terms literally mean'fiend' or 'ghost' languages).It has survived from the ancient times. The names Naga and Pishaccha given to the natives of Kashmir were given by those on the mainland India, who were completely ignorant about the Kashmiri communities, in particular, and the society as a whole. Though these names stuck, thanks to the puranic literature, the Kashmiris themselves never accepted them as is evident from the fact that they still call their language Kashur. The linguists of yore in India never realised that if you deny the linguistic roots of the people of any region out of a compulsion to prove another language superior, it results in a cultural confusion. They happily continued to expend their efforts in finding the roots of the problems faced by such marginal language groups in the theory of a particular people's migration. That this theory and their attempts do not hold water is proved by the fact that they have not been able to determine the place of origin of these proto-Aryan language speakers as yet.

We need to discard the theory now and take a fresh look at the origin of the Indian languages.

* * *

The history of Lalitaditya is very significant for the Indian subcontinent. It throws light on the connection India had with the rest of the world and the nature of her political and social relationships with it. Moreover, we come to know that this valiant king didnot just keep the then superpowers China and Tibet at bay through his diplomacy and his military power, but he also extended the boundaries of his Kashmiri empire to thenorth of Hindukush and Pamir ranges. Most of the wars in that era were born out of the need to rule over the trade routes and not for promoting any religion.

Lalitaditya took help of King Yashovarman of Kanauj to drive out the Arabs from the northwestern India; later, he even conquered Turkestan. This book will reveal how his politics can guide us as a nation even in today's times.

There can be no doubt that Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* preserved Kashmir's history to a large extent.The insatiable curiosity of Stein led him not just to translating Kalhana's work into English but also to analyse the historical evidence that was still available in the 19thcentury in a systematic manner. His efforts were not emulated by anyone after him.

My friend Sanjay Nahar has done a historically invaluable job of publishing the Marathi translation of *Rajatarangini*, which was done by Dr Aruna Dhere and Prashant Talnikar while the Marathi translation of Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*was done by Prashant Talnikar. It is for the students of the subject to look at the history of Kashmir in different periods analytically using these important documents and organise it logically and chronologically. Likewise, the *Nilamata Purana,* which narrates the ancient history of Kashmir in puranic style, needs to be studied in a scientific manner.

Sanjay Nahar has devoted his life to Kashmir. Along with his tireless efforts to solve the current issue afflicting the region, he has done a great nationalistic work of placing the history of that region from the ancient, medieval and the modern times before the readers. I am sure history will take note of his extraordinary work.

* * *

Kashmir was an epitome of a knowledge centre of not just India but of entire Asia between the seventh to 12thcenturies CE. Buddhism reached Central Asia and China through Kashmir,in a uniquely Kashmiri form having an influence of Kashmiri Shaivism. Many Kashmiri Buddhist monks (bhikkhus) established their

monasteries (Mutts) in China.They translated hundreds of treatises from Pali and Sanskrit into the Cantonese. Innumerable Asian bhikkhus have visited Kashmir and have stayed there for long periods. Abhinavgupta took the philosophy of Kashmiri Shaivism to great heights,due to which this philosophy retained its influence on virtually entire India for centuries thereafter.

As Kashmir became a melting pot of the Asian cultures, the folk mind of the Kashmiris evolved greatly. Even when the land of Kashmir was teeming with the Shaivas, the Vaishnavas, the Buddhists,and the Jains and in spite of the enormous religious brainstorming, Kashmir rarely saw communal conflicts. The kings of Kashmir before and after Lalitaditya were largely secular in their outlook, whichreflected in their administration. The political conflicts there hardly assumed religious dimensions.

Today, Kashmir is in turmoil. The Kashmiri people ought to look back at their liberal religious and social traditions once again. Kashmir has always followed the traditions of the quest for knowledge and creativity, besides expanding its influence in the world. In today's times,the Kashmiris have the ability to rule the world through science and technology. I am very optimistic about Kashmir becoming the paradise of knowledge and creativity once again and proving to be a knowledge centre of the nation all over again one day. I would like to think that Lalitaditya had a similar dream commensurate with his times.He fulfilled it.

We need new Lalitadityas to come up from Kashmir and strive to lead this 'Paradise on Earth' to great heights in various fields.

* * *

Chapter 1

The Rise of the Karkota Dynasty

After a long reign of the mythological dynasty, Gonandiya, the Karkota dynasty came to power in Kashmir. The term 'mythological'indicates that there is no evidence available anywhere to prove the historicity of the Gonandiya dynasty. The origin of the Karkota dynasty is also unknown to the history. However, there is historical evidence of the Karkota dynasty'sexistence since its very first king.Hence, some scholars believe that Kashmir's political history begins with the Karkota dynasty.

The known and unknown historians of India are prone to create wondrous myths when they cannot find the origins of the ancient dynasties. The Karkota dynasty is no exception to this. While creating such myths, naturally there is an aura of mystery, even divinity created around them. With the passage of time,additions were made to this aura. Some communal-minded writers even try to attach the great historical personalities to their own religion or sect somehow, while creating such myths. This is true of many ruling families in the history. However, such attempts are fraught with the danger of losing the true origin of these families irretrievably. An important case in point is that of the Maurya dynasty. Of course, this argument doesnot mean that the myths about the origin of kings and their families are entirely untrue.Adeeper investigation into the text can lead us to the truth because most mythological accounts are rooted in some or the other historical, natural, political event or in the social conditions of the time. The mythology writers usually use these events or these conditions as the base and then create fantastic stories around them. A comparative investigation into similar myths can also reveal their authenticity.

Every culture in the world has a unique style of creating myths. Many of the myths are labelled as 'Historical Accounts'. Even though a lot of variation is found

in the myths of different states in India, the style of these tales is distinctly different from those in the Vedas. If one can peel the layers of imagination carefully from the myths, one may be able to find traces of facts under them because that is how they are presented. Itis a science.[1]

The reason this needs to be done is that historiography as a science never developed properly in India. One is, therefore, forced to decipher the myths and contemplate what may have happened all those years ago.Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is written with much awareness about history but being replete with myths and legends, we need to be conscious of this fact as we relive the history of the Karkota dynasty up to and including Lalitaditya.

As noted above, the Karkota dynasty came to the throne in Kashmir after the long-living Gonandiya dynasty finally ended in 625 AD. Kalhana has given facts as known in his times, along with an attendant myth, about the origin of the new dynasty. It briefly goes like this -

"The last ruler of the Gonandiya dynasty, Baladitya, was told by an astrologer that his dynasty will cease to rule after his death. Thereafter, his son-in-law would get the throne. Baladitya had a beautiful daughter Anangalekha. Forewarned by the astrologer, Baladitya decided to hoodwink the destiny.He avoided marrying his daughter into any royal family. This way, she would never get to usurp the kingdom, he thought.

"He married her to Durlabhvardhana, a horse fodder accountant from a Kayastha family (the Kayasthas were typically the royal servants) by making a capital of the handsomeness of the young man. What the king didnot know, however, was once upon a time, the Karkotaka Naga (a cobra) secretly had sex with Durlabhvardhana's mother when she was bathing in a stream.Being Karkotaka's son, Durlabhvardhana was destined to be a king. Fate bestows fortune just on that person, whom the self-professed wise men declare unfit, as if to defeat and humiliate them." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*3, 485-491)

This excerpt clearly shows three principles of this mythical history.

One – Suggestive use of astrology to explain anything extraordinary (in this case the marriage of a princess with a common man).

Two – To prove that the young man (Durlabhvardhana) was born with the 'right' to be a king, use of a 'trick' that the cobra Karkotaka had an unnatural, mysterious yet pure coitus with a human female.

Three – Use of a historical fact of the contemporary society, wherein there were people of the category 'horse fodder accountant Kayastha'.

The fact that comes out of these three principles is that Durlabhvardhana was serving King Baladitya as a 'horse fodder accountant or a Kayastha'.This actual social status of Durlabhvardhanais preserved in the story.

A Kayastha in those days was a person, who was an administrative officer, clerk, accountant or someone who maintained the public records. It wasnot a caste. Anyone who had the requisite skills for the above-mentioned jobs could get this position. After the 11th-12thcentury, the Kayasthas began to marry within their group, eventually making it a caste of birth. There is evidence to suggest that similar thing happened with many other castes albeit their regional contexts remained. By Kalhana's time, perhaps the Kayasthas had already started marrying among themselves. In this context, it would be interesting and important to note a statement by Lalitaditya as recorded by Kalhana, which is –

"…(if) the Kayasthas started coming together through marriage alliances.The kings become Kayasthas by disposition, you can be sure that the misfortune is going to befall the people soon." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4 -352)

However, for various reasons, it is still unclear if the accountants and the administrative officers were called 'Kayasthas' in the eighth century. Firstly, there is no mention of this job or caste in the ancient Vedic theology nor is there any mention of it among the hybrid castes. Though the later *smritis*such as *Narad*, *Brihaspati*, *Vyas*, etc do mention essential administrative posts such as clerks, secretaries and accountants, the post or term 'Kayastha' is not found in it. Also, no reference is found of this class of people earning their living on writing as a job belonging to any particular Varna of the Vedic system. The first ever mention of the term is found in the *Mitakshara*, wherein too, it comes across as the name of a profession and not a caste. This *smriti* mentions that a 'Kayastha' is an accountant and a clerk (*Mitakshara*, Achar Adhyaya, 335). This *smriti* was written in circa 12thcentury. It is believed to be accepted by the Vedic people all over India, except those in Bengal and Assam.

The first mention of Kayastha as a caste is found in the Srushti Khand of the *Padma Purana*. Here, it is said that Brahma created Chitragupta from his own body. Then he assigned the job of recording the good and bad deeds of every human being to Chitragupta, whomhe placed under Dharmaraja. Since Chitraguptawas born out of Brahma's body, he was called 'Kayastha'. His progeny was also called Kayastha, whowere Kshatriyas (warriors). Further, according to the Srushti Khand, the descendants of Chitragupta are also known as the Kayasthas.Among these Kayasthas inhabiting the earth, there are various families belonging to different Varnas. The *Padma Purana* was written sometime during the11thand 15thcenturies.However, the Srushti Khand was added to it much later.

Similar information is provided in the *Bhavishya Purana*. It is believed to have been written after the fifth century.But its text was augmented from time to time.Therefore, it is difficult to know with certainty, which part of the text was inserted when, rendering the entire book useless from the historical point of view. We find that a number of myths have been inserted into the puranas by various

people in an attempt to put their respective castes at the higher echelons of society. Since the *puranas* had more religious influence on the social mind, its stories attained importance.The 'divine' birth of various castes received a solid ground to take roots. Nevertheless, only the socially and/or politically influential castes could actually achieve this privilege to insert such stories in mythological books. After the administrative class such as the royal accountants and record keepers rose in influence and started being a closed community of sorts by way of marrying within the group, the stories about their origin were written. This, one can deduce, happened after the 12thcentury.

It is interesting to note that within the Kayasthas, different myths prevailed about their origin, in different geographical regions. For example, the Chandraseni Kayasthas have a story, which is entirely different from the others. This story is found in the Renuka Mahatmya of the *Skanda Purana*. According to this story, when Parshuram began annihilation of the Kshatriyas, the first person he killed was Sahasrarjuna. Sahasrarjuna's wife Chandrasena was pregnant with his child.Fearing that Parshuram may kill her baby in her womb, she took refuge in the ashram of Rishi Dalabhya. Parshuram went to the ashram.He told Dalabhya that since he had vowed to kill every Kshatriya on earth, he would have to kill the would-be mother and demanded her custody. However, Dalabhya put a condition that he would hand over Chandrasena to him only if the child in her womb is returned to Dalabhya. Dalabhya was a pious Brahmin. Parshuram acceded to his request in spite of his own vow.He, in turn, told the *rishi* that the baby be named 'Kayashtha' as it was still inside themother's womb. He further declared that the boy, Kayastha, when grown up, would undertake clerical work like Chitragupta.

When Chandrasena gave birth to the baby boy in due course, he was named Kayastha.He is considered to have established the Chandraseni KayasthaPrabhu caste. The point to be noted here is that there is no mention of Chandrasena in any of the other so many myths about Parshuram's annihilation of the Kshatriyas. It means this character was created, especially for making up this story about the origin of the caste.

The stories narrated above completely differ from each other.They do not tell us the exact mythological origin of the Kayastha caste or whether the Kayasthas are Brahmins or Kshatriyas. It suffices to say that the Kayasthas from different regions created their own stories about their origin. Enchanted by the Vedic Varna system, after the 10thcentury, many professional Hindu castes tried to link their respective castes to the higher Varnas by means of wanton additions or insertions to the puranas.However, the Vedic religious system never approved it. Nonetheless, these efforts succeeded in creating a big cultural confusion in the Hindu society, which remains unresolved even today. When the Maharashtrian Kayasthas sued the Brahmin Varna, the Vedic religious system refused to accept

their claims. In this respect, a judicial decision during the Peshwa rule can be an eye opener.

"All the Brahmins of 1144 (1010) village Pen, province Sakasepetitioned in court that, during the rule of Late Shrimant Narayanrao Saheb, he had passed a resolution regarding the duties of the Parabhus (Prabhus), which they should follow. However, instead of following their own religious practices, they secretly and adamantly were performing Brahminical religious duties. These people needed to be warned and prevented from doing so.Therefore, when this was brought to the notice of the late Peshwa honourable Raosaheb, an inquiry was conducted.A resolution with various clauses was passed. Those people had submitted a written acceptance of the same, the details of the clauses therein are as follows –

1. We shall not perform any rituals using Vedic mantras
1 We shall not chant the Vedic mantras that we know
1 We shall not make rice balls for the dead
1 We shall perform the pujas of the gods and the related rituals only using the puranic mantras. Also, we shall never organise dinners meant only for the Brahmins at our homes
1 We shall not worship the Shaligram (a symbolic piece of stone representing God Vishnu)
1 We shall visit the temples, which the Shudras visit
1 We shall pay respects to the Brahmins loudly whenever we come across them in their areas.We shall do the same even in our own areas
1 We shall not employ Vedic Brahmin cooks and servants, Brahmin students and Brahmin women and never offer them shelter in our houses
1 We shall not prevent anyone from willingly conducting divorcee or widow- remarriages in our caste

Even after giving these aforesaid nine clauses in writing, the Parabhus continue to perform the VedicBrahmanical duties secretly at home,due to which the dispute between them and the Brahmins of Pen has aggravated and the Brahmins are not getting assignments in Parabhu households to carry out their Brahminical duties. In this regard, taking the present times into consideration, the Parabhus' conduct is investigated and duties have been fixed, to which they shall stick to. It is wrong that their behaviourbecomes contrary to their own religion. According to the good counsel, performing the duties as fixed by the court is the appropriate way.The Parabhu households in Pune should be strictly warned and forced to act as per the aforesaid clauses. Appropriate action should be taken against whoever acts contrary to this notice and should be booked as an offender.

Letters ofSecretary." [2]

In short, the Court Order prohibited the Chandraseni Kayastha Prabhus from chanting Vedic mantras and performing religious rituals in the Vedic manner.It directed them to perform their religious rituals strictly as per the puranic system. This shows that the Vedic authorities knew that the Vedic and the Hindu (or Puaranic) religions were different.

The caste system started to stratify among the Hindus after the 10thcentury. The Kayastha castewas born quite later as well. The myths above have been concocted after the closed caste of the clerks and accountants came into existence with a view to somehow link them to the Vedic Varna system.They were inserted in the *puranas* to lend them socio-religious credibility. We can also see how many castes in India, irrespective of their occupation, used Parshuram cleverly to convince others that they were originally the Kshatriyas.However, their forefathers feared Parshuram's wrath and hid their identity by undertaking other professions.

Though the Kayastha community is found all over India, their status vis-a-vis the Vedic religionis different in different regions. Anthropologists agree that this community isnot homogenous. In some regions, it claims to be the Kshatriyaswhile in others, they call themselves to be the Brahmins. According to historian Ghurye, the Kayasthas of Bengal are categorised among the Sadshudras. The Bengali community is primarily split into the Brahmins and the Shudras. The Shudras have been further divided into four categories, Sadshudra being one of them with the Kayasthas included in it.[3]

During the reign of the Gonandiyas, accountants or clerksmerely belonged to a profession.Amember of any community could enter into it. According to *Rajatarangini,* even the Brahmins practised this profession. At the time, it wasnot a closed caste.So, there was no custom among them to marry within the professional community. This fact is quite in line with our argument. In any case, the closed system of castes as we see today had not come into existence then. Naturally, there was no sense of superiority or inferiority based on castes in society. The Varna system had no influence on the Hinducommunities. Therefore, neither the king (Baladitya) thought much about marrying off his daughter to an accountant or a civil servant nor does it appear that society took any objection citing religious commands on such an alliance. If it was so, Kalhana would have surely recorded it.

Besides, it is questionable whether the designation 'Kayastha' for a clerk or accountant even existed during Durlabhvardhana's time. The Kayasthas as a caste surely didnot exist then obviating the need to make up a story about its origin. Later, when the *puranas* imagined a character named Chitragupta keeping the records of good and bad deeds, the clerks and accountants linked themselves to him.Thus, a story about their profession's origin was first created. Later, when their fraternity became a close-knit social community or a caste, they chose the name 'Kayastha' to denote it.

Durlabhvardhana being a commoner working in the royal administration belonged to the lower stratum of society. To explain away the event of this commoner getting married with a princess, the prediction of an astrologer was concocted in the myth given in *Rajatarangini*. This is by far the most common trick used by most Indian historians of the ancient. They found it easy to use things such as prophesy or boons and curses for preparing their readers (or listeners) to accept the apparently illogical or extraordinary events in the past. The Mahabharata teems with such incidents. For example, we find five different stories explaining why Draupadi married five brothers. When the Mahabharata was finally redacted, the phenomenon of polyandry had already gone out of practice and was no more socially acceptable. In such a situation, it was essential to find a way to make Draupadi's marriage with the five Pandavas palatable.Thus, these divine myths came into existence.

Perhaps, the phenomenon of a commoner marrying a princess was a common practice earlier.However, by the time of Kalhana, it may have become an extraordinary thing or a taboo. Therefore, it may have become necessary to use the astrology and the trick scene of King Baladitya wanting to defy the fate. If we look deeper, however, it appears that this marriage was the outcome of a love affair.It had taken place with the blessings of the doting father, the king.

In this argument, the opinion that Durlabhvardhana was born in the Kayastha 'Caste' doesnot hold. The contemporarysociety was open. So, performance alone was the way to come up in life. For that, choosing one's preferred vocation or changing it was a normal thing. There was no caste or Varna-based context to it. Yet, some historians say that Durlabhvardhana was a Vaishya and not a Naga.Hence, the possibility of him being a Kshatriya can not be denied.[4]

To understand this, let us first understand the social system of Kashmir in those days.

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* or Damodargupta's *Kuttanitim* were both written after the 10thcentury.Therefore, they do occasionallymention, besides the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras.But one must understand that prior to the 10thcentury, there is no evidence of the Vedic Varna system having introduced itself in Kashmir. The Kashmiri society was entirely divided on vocational or socio-economical lines. The warrior class was known by the names–the Tantrins, the Ekangas and the Lavanyas.These names didnot denote castes. They were made up of the farmers and the tribal communities of the hilly regions. These social classes were not homogenous as well. They constantly fought with each other for supremacy.At times, these conflicts resulted into change of reign.[5]

The Tantrins were a powerful community or class of farmers. They were experts in warfare (Their descendants still exist). It is quite possible that the name 'Tantrin'was derived as they followed the Tantra philosophy. The terms

'Agriculture' and 'Tantra' were often used interchangeably. At several places in *Rajatarangini*, these people have been called the 'cruel snake charmers' hinting at their being followers of Tantricism. These Tantrins were so powerful, it was almost mandatory for the king of Kashmir to have their support. Although there is no clear mention, it is possible that many kings belonged to this community. Pooja Parashar observes in this respect, "If a person was close to the Tantrins, he had more chance of becoming a king."[6]

The origin of the Ekangas is a mystery but they are repeatedly mentioned in the fifth to seventh tarangas of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. It is estimated that they were the people who worked as the royal bodyguards, revenue collectors and forest security officers. They were certainly a part of the armed forces. When the Tantrins rebelled against queen Didda, it was the Ekangas, who crushed the rebellion. They exercised a great influence on the royal court and the administration. They largely managed to get along with the Tantrins but conflicts among the two powers over the choice of kings were quite frequent. Kalhana has recorded some of these conflicts.[7]

There is no evidence about the Ekangas being a specific, closed caste.Hence one can conclude that people from all sections of society entered this profession on their will and leveraged their collective power to keep the kings in check. Basically, one can argue that the Ekangas were salaried employees of the king.In no way did they belong to some caste by birth.

The third community, the Lavanyas, was a tribal warrior community spread over rural Kashmir.It exists even today.

One more powerful class of people in the Kashmir Valley was the Damaras, who were the feudal landlords and were very influential. Apparently, the Damaras had caused a lot of trouble during Lalitaditya's rule.This is evident from his last decree, in which Lalitaditya had clearly ordered imposition of strict restrictions on them.

Communities such as the Kiratas, the Nishads and the Dombas have been mentioned occasionally in the puranic literature. We know that these names were given to the forest-dwelling tribes by the Vedic people. However, what we probably donot know is that in Kashmir, they were not regarded as the Shudras, an absive term used by the Vedics to addres Hindus. The Kashmiri society had freedom of marriage among the various communities. One such example is cited by Kalhana. The two singer-dancer daughters of a Domba artiste called Ranga once performed in the court of King Chakravarman (10^{th}century). Pleased by their performance and smitten by their beauty, the king married one of them, Hamsi and made her his favourite queen. Naturally, the Dombas also became dear to the king.So much so that some of them even became his important counsellors. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 5, 354, 387, 389)

People from the farming community Dramik, the cultivators of vegetables, also freely took up the Kayastha profession. According to Toshkhani, anyone in the administrative service in Kashmir was called a Kayastha, irrespective of their social class, including the Brahmins (Pandits or Bhatts). Even the term Brahmin was used not to denote a particular Varna of people but to denote anyone performing the concerned duties or anyone who was a scholar. It is for this reason that we find references in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* that people from different classes or communities exerted their influence, based on their intelligence or skills, on even the kings. Any scholar was called Pandit or Bhatt in Kashmir.[8]

However, during the period of Vedic supremacy, the Kashmiri Pandits attached themselves with the Brahmin Varna.Like the Kayasthas, they confined themselves to it. The *Nilamata Purana* tried for the first time to fit professional classes into the Varna system. However, the attempts to enfold the Hindu professionals into the Vedic Varna system were unsuccessful, largely because the social system in Kashmir was purely based on individual skills.On that basis, people freely chose the profession/business that suited their skills. At least till the 10thcentury, this was true about every other society in India. Later, when the Vedic religion prevailed everywhere, a discriminatory social system evolved. Nevertheless, Kashmir was sucked into this process much later and that mostly was confined to the Brahmin Varna.

Though Kalhana does not expressly mention specific Varna, some scholars have attempted to equate names of professions to the Vedic Varnas, e.g. Vanik (trader) and Shreshthi (chief of the professional guilds) being names connected with trading, they tried to deducethat they were Vaishyas.[9]Some scholars, obviously to prove that Kashmir had the Varna system too, have tried to categorise the warrior communities as the Kshatriyas, but no such direct references are found in the history.

This means the social milieu of Kashmir comprised the comfortably cohabitant communities. It hadnot acquired Varna or closed casteist contexts, at least, till around the 10thcentury. In the later period, according to Dr Ajaymitra Shastri, "…as various occupations became hereditary, they formed castes (*jatis)*. To adjust the various castes to the Varna system, *Smritis* considered *Anuloma* (marriage of lower Varna woman with a high Varna man) and *Pratiloma* (marriage of high Varna woman with a lower Varna man) marriages being responsible for the emergence of the various castes. However, this attempt seems to have failed as people mentioned their own professional castes in various donation inscriptions.[10]

Going beyond this discussion on castes, we can say with certainty that the Tantric sects of the Shaivite Hinduism were the most prominent inhabitants of Kashmir and Serpent as well as Nature worship was the major part of their faith. The Kashmiri society was an amalgamation of several such sects and subsects.

The Naga Origin

In the aforesaidcontext, we can now look at the Naga origin of King Durlabhvardhana. The story about his birth out of the coitus between a human female and the Cobra Karkotaka is a myth, for the simple reason that it is biologicallyimpossible. A similar tale is also told about the origin of the Satvahana dynasty. The story goes like this:A Brahmin woman bathing in the river begot a son from a cobra (Naga).He became the founder of the Satvahana dynasty. In short, when the exact origin is not known or if the dynasty is to be deified, such tricks were used.

It is clear that the story about Durlabhvardhana was created to emphasise that his birth was divine.Therefore, he was eligible to become the king. Besides, his real biological parents were lost to history, hence the need of a story. Of course, even then an important question remains: Why a Naga father? The tales given in the *Nilamata Purana* depict an ancient relation between Kashmir and the Nagas as well as the Pishaccha people. Even Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* shows influence of the Naga tales. In spite of all this, there are historians and researchers who try to negate the connection between the Nagas and the Kashmiri culture.

It is no more secret that Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* has the influence of legends and myths. Therefore, many modern historians refuse to regard it as a credible source of information. Critics have also recorded their reservations about the story of the origin of the Karkota dynasty. While some opine that Durlabhvardhana having attained kingship rising from the lowest social stratum, himself promoted this story just to deify his lineage.Some others propose that he belonged to one of the several serpent-worshipping communities of Kashmir. However, yet some other historians refute the theory of Kashmir being home to serpent-worshipping communities because there is no archaeological evidence of serpent worship in that region.[11]Our task, therefore, is to weave our way through these various theories and propositions and reach the real history of the Karkota dynasty.

The culture of serpent worship in India dates back to the pre-Vedic period. In fact, serpents have captured an important position in the myths and divine tales of all the cultures in the world. In the context of Kashmir, the *Nilamata Purana* has emphatically said that the Nagaculture was prominent there. There is a big conundrum. There is a lot of inscriptional and documentary evidence up to the sixth century that the aggressive Aryans drove away the Nagas of the northwest India altogether or through conflicts as well as intermarriages learned to cohabit with them. But in Kashmir proper, no such evidence has been found as yet. Why?[12] We have to solve this conundrum simply because now that the theory of Aryan

invasion itself is null and void, we need to take a fresh view of the history of Kashmir.

The invalidity of the theory of Aryan Invasion has been discussed in detail in the preface. That makes Kashmiri language an indigenous language.Whatever influences it had due to human interaction since the ancient times were perhaps of the Gandhar and Magadhi Prakrit languages. The question as to why Kalhana didnot use Kashmiri language to write his *Rajatarangini* is pointless because Sanskrit had been gradually developed between circa third century BC and second century CE for the specific purpose of literature. The whole idea behind this was that there should be one language of literature, which could be understood by scholars from all over India. The development process of Sanskrit from Prakrit languages had the contribution from various elements of society, including the Buddhists. After Panini wrote his book of grammar, the language was formalised.[13]

However, the new language had some flaws. While adopting words from the Prakrit languages, in many cases, the original meanings of the words were changed.In some cases, the original words themselves got lost. For example, the name 'Pussamitta Suga' became 'Pushyamitra Shunga', 'Salahan' became 'Shalivahan' and 'Sadakani' became 'Satkarni' in their Sanskrit avatar. As a result, the latter-day scholars, who tried, couldnot find the original meanings of the sound-changed words Shalivahan and Satkarni anywhere. There were attempts to search for 'Shunga' Gotra in the Vedic literature, but they were bound to fail as these were sanskritised forms of the original Prakrit, which naturally denoted different meanings and relevance. In a deliberate effort to perpetuate unscientific concept that 'Sanskrit is the mother of all other languages', the fact that there is no evidence to support it was conveniently ignored. It is highly probable that the name Karkotaka is the sanskritised version of an originally Kashmiri Prakrit language (Paishachi) word because like the word Shudra (original Prakrit word Sudda), Karkotaka also etymologically cannot be traced to Sanskrit.[14]

Granting that Sanskrit is pleasant to the ears, the fact remains that it changed the meanings of many words. Kashmiri language being indigenously developed, many of its original words were forgotten in the process of the sanskritisation. The Rigveda does not mention the words 'Naga', 'Naga worship' or any other word related to them anywhere. The nameAhi, in the Rigveda is frequently used for serpentsand not Naga. Not even a trace of snake worship is found in the Vedic literature.

Therefore,it is obvious that the few Vedic Aryans, who came to India subsequently, learned these terms and names much later from the local converts and other communities. Perhaps for this reason, the names of cobras such as Kaliya, Shesha, Vasuki, Takshak, Pundarik and Karkotaka are found in the later (translated) Sanskrit literature and not in the Vedic religious literature. It is obvious

that these were not the cobras but the various human totemic communities engaged in the cobra worship. The devotees of the cobra,the Takshaks, were the inhabitants of Gandhar, living around Taxila. Likewise, maybe the devotees of the cobra Karkotaka were the inhabitants of Kashmir and the surrounding regions.

One cannot say that these Naga-worshipping people shared the same genes or belonged to the same tribe or that all these communitiesperformed the same rituals. This is because the anthropologists say unequivocally that though the intermingling of different human groups and their myths began very early, they successfully preserved their independent cultural peculiarities. Also, these societies responding to the name 'Naga' did not worship serpents alone; rather they worshipped all the components of nature such as trees, mountains, rivers, rocks, etc. The available archaeological evidence shows that they performed ritualistic puja of the symbols of phallus and vagina for fertility as well. In fact, we need to understand here that a Naga or cobra is a phallic symbol belonging to fertility worship. Therefore, the communities that worshipped the phallus, worshipped serpents also.

Evidence of different kinds of puja being performed has been found in the Sindhu civilization. Every land has engendered its own culture in consonance with its unique geology and ecology. At the same time, they seem to have borrowed some cultural elements from other cultures as well. In this context, since the Naga culture wasnot confined to any particular land, we cannot point at a singular culture, as the source of the Naga culture.

In the *Vishnu Purana*, the cobra Karkotaka is named among the 12 major cobras. Though all the *puranas* have been written after the 14thcentury CE, the essential elements of many of them can be traced back to the Prakrit literature and the ancient folklore. The 12th century *Naishadhiya Charitra* mentions Karkotaka in the story of Nala-Damayanti. The Karkotaka in this story lived in a forest neighbouring the Nishad kingdom, as the king of the cobras. The myth has been written assuming Karkotaka was an actual cobra. For our purpose, we need not go deeper into the element of truth in the tale.It would suffice to note that this tale is more of a folk tale. Even the Nishad kingdom mentioned in it needs to be looked at as a reference to the context of the story because it cannot be found in the history. The epics tell us that the Nishads were the forest-dwelling tribe but this name isnot invented by the tribe itself. It is a term invented by the Vedic people to denote a particular people, about whom they scarcely knew. Incidentally, the Karkotaka in the Nala-Damayanti tale is benevolent.[15]

Though the tale doesnot reveal the exact location of the people, to whom Karkotaka was the main deity, we can say that the name was popular enough to find its way into the folk tales and epics.

Notwithstanding the many references in the folklore and the *Nilamata Purana*, according to Khalid Basheer Ahmed, there is no evidence to prove the existence of the Naga culture in Kashmir. He further says that no idol, inscription or coins with an image of or related to the Nagas before the sixth century CE can be found. Barring the *Nilamata Purana*, no other *purana* or document about the land describes the Naga culture in Kashmir. Even ancient foreign writers/travellers such as Plini, Strabo and Herodotus in their direct or indirect references to Kashmir do not link Kashmir with the Naga culture, Khalid says.[16]

This author is of the opinion that this is a mere conjecture and easily refutable. It assumes that the Naga culture everywhere was the same. Khalid has overlooked the possibility of Kashmir having its own unique Naga culture and its form having been completely different. Besides, Abul Fazal has noted that there were 700 holy places in Kashmir, where carved images of cobra were present. This important reference cannot be overlooked.[17] Maybe, the images in question were wooden because of the abundance of this material in Kashmir.Hence,they may have withered away with the passage of time. Therefore, it would be fallacious to claim that Kashmir didnot have the Naga culture, just because there is no Naga image found in Kashmir.

Available evidence tells us that the Naga-worshipping people worshipped, along with the Shiva and Shakti, serpents, bulls, Yakshas and the trees. The relics supporting this view are found far up to Balochistan. Even then, this culture was not serpent-centric but worshipped Shiva and Shakti as main deities, along with the bull. It is difficult to guess the exact religious position of the serpents in this culture. Considering that the Sindhu civilisation was agriculture-centric, a bull was naturally the most important part of their culture.But since the images of serpents were found, along with other animals from that time, serpents were certainly important for them and had a place in their fertilisation-related rituals.

(The serpent images of the Sindhu Culture)

Looking at the geographical proximity of Kashmir, Pakhtunistan and Gandhar even with a mountain range dividing them, one cannot dare say the Kashmiris were unfamiliar with the other cultures. Likewise, looking at the close relationship between Kashmir and the Nagas as well as Shiva and Shakti as described in the *puranas*, it would be unhistorical to say that since thereis no Naga image found in Kashmir, the Naga culture didnot exist in Kashmir.

Significantly, the Naga images from the Sindhu culture were not stone carved.They are found on the seals. Even though the *Nilamata Purana* is influenced by the Vedic mythological narration, one can see the mythical and folk tales in it are rooted in Kashmir. Maybe the streams and rivers and the mountains were worshipped as symbols of the Nagas.The actual Naga images may have come much later. In Kashmir, even today, a water streams is called Naga. When Kalhana says that Durlabhvardhana's mother conceived him from Naga Karkotaka when she was bathing in a stream, we need to look at it in this context.

If we are to accept that there was no Naga culture in Kashmir, we would have to say that the serpent-worshipping sects were established there by the Buddhists, the Jains and the Shaivites, because the Nagas had created a special position for themselves in these three religions already. Among them, the Shaivite phallus worshipping religion is the most ancient.Since the cobra is regarded as a phallic symbol, one cannot really differentiate between the phallus (linga) worshippers and the serpent worshippers. The close affinity between Shiva and cobra is quite well known. However, it is quite natural that in the local context, the rituals vary from place to place. We can say that the Kashmiri people had adopted or independently developed the Naga culture palatable and suitable for themselves.

It is believed that Buddhism entered Kashmir through Emperor Ashoka in the third century BC. It is possible that Jainism too came to Kashmir around the same time. Since Shaivism is the only prehistoric religion, it must be present in Kashmir before these two religions. Most of the important Shaivite places are in Kashmir.So, the claim that in the prehistoric period, there were no serpent-worshipping Shaivite communities in Kashmir is rather bold. Even when these three religions existed in the rest of the country, there were societies and dynasties that identified themselves with Naga clans. They also ruled major parts of the country for a long time.[18]

Durlabhvardhana cannot be the son of the cobra Karkotaka because that is biologically impossible, as we know. However, the fact that the cobra was still linked to his birth and his dynasty came to be known by the cobra's name indicates that Durlabhvardhana's family was somehow connected with the serpent-worshippers.This part of history remained in the folk memory till the time of Kalhana, who then put it on paper. The clan of the cobra Karkotaka does not exist anywhere else in the country, even in the mythical tales. Therefore, it is quite

possible that the name being from Kashmiri language, albeit in some other form, which was later sanskritised. It would hence be more appropriate to call the Karkotaka clan as the community of people, who worshipped serpents and called itself Karkotaka or whatever the original Kashmiri word was.

Besides, Naga does not necessarily point at a serpent. In the Kashmiri language, Naga also means a streamlet and even a mountain. There are innumerable holy streamlets in Kashmir. Every water bodyhere has a protector Naga deity. Fishing in these holy streamlets is prohibited in Kashmir. Many Kashmiri festivals are related to worship of Nagas (streamlets). The *Nilamata Purana* has listed nearly 537 holy Nagas. In fact, according to Nandita Krishna, the Nagapuja ritual originated in Kashmir and then spread across the country.[19]

Though the myths about the origin of Kashmir itself and the names of Nagas mentioned in the *Nilamata Purana* have had a significant influence post the puranic period.Today, we have the liberty to use our judgement in interpreting them based on historical evidence.

From the above discussion, we can propose that the Nagas of Kashmir could very well be water-worshippers or mountain-worshippers as well. Knowing that the region has a multitude of both the objects of worship, perhaps the Kashmiris never thought it necessary to make their artificial images to worship them. This also may be the reason why they chose to consider the streamlets similar toNagas. Moreover, the word Naga not being native to Sanskrit and the fact that it is worshipped in India differently in different geographical regions. According to some scholars, one cannot say for sure that the Nagas of Kashmir were even serpent-worshippers. It is also possible that under the influence of the *Nilamata Purana*, every water body in Kashmir was linked to some or the other Naga. In any case, a slithering serpent is quite similar in appearance to a bounding stream. Therefore, it wouldnot be wrong to consider that a serpent or a waterbody worship came into existence in Kashmir in the prehistoric period. The Naga worship in this region is independent of any other of its kind and is highly influenced by the local natural setting. That the Naga worship took different forms in different regions of India shows that the concept of worship per se varied in different geographies.

However, we must take note of an important aspect here, that is, the animosity between the serpent worshippers and the Vedic culture. It is evident from various stories such as the burning down of the Khandava forest in the Mahabharata and the Sarpasatra yagya by King Janamejaya. Though the Nagas in these stories were purportedly actual serpents, we can say fairly certainly that the serpent-worshippers were present in India, like the rest of the world, even before the arrival of Vedic people. For this reason, even those who do not accept the serpents as the only deity also worship the serpents in their rituals. This is the

reason why we often find images of serpents, trees, Yakshas, etc in all the major Hindu temples, including Buddhist Viharas, Chaityas and Jaina temples, along with the presidingdeities or religious symbols.

If we take the word Naga to mean a serpent or a streamlet, it still means that people who worshipped them as their chief deities existed in Kashmir. Hence, one can deduce that Durlabhvardhana was a young man belonging to a typical serpent- or stream-worshipping community of Kashmir.

Speaking of the social status of Durlabhvardhana, most of the professions in Kashmir were part of the individual family tradition.The younger generations learned their family trade at home as well as the training centres ran by the professional guilds.Yet, they were free to choose a vocation of their liking.[20] Therefore, there was no concept of high or low birth based on the caste or Varna. Consequently, it didnot apply to Durlabhvardhana as well. The process of formation of the castes out of hereditary professions began in India only after circa10thcentury AD due to drastically changed political and economic conditions. Influence of the Vedic Varna system began to overshadow the Hindu society thereby creating compartmentalised caste system while sowing the discriminatory concept of high-low on the basis of birth. *Purana* writers played a major role in this social change. Eventhe *Nilamata Purana* and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* were no exceptions in many instances. We have to bear in mind that during the times of Durlabhvardhana, Kayastha was merely a profession and not a caste. If one has to call Durlabhvardhana a man from a lowly family, it could only be done on the basis of his ordinary job.The fact that his family was never ever close to kingship. However, this does not affect his importance because he overcame his ordinary circumstances and established a powerful kingdom, which speaks volumes about his innate extraordinary qualities.

Let us not forget also that even a commoner could ascend the throne in Kashmir, which shows the free (and just) social system that existed there. That King Baladitya married off his daughter to Durlabhvardhana because he was handsome cannot be true. Even granting that he didnot want to marry her into any other royal dynasty, he could have easily found some equally handsome young man belonging to some blue-blooded family from his circle. Besides, the story takes the daughter Anangalekha for granted. She otherwise does not come across as a docile girl, accepting whatever her father decided for her unquestioningly. Moreover, women have enjoyed enormous freedom and power in the Kashmiri society, including ruling the kingdom in the past. Though Kalhana calls her one with a loose character, the other descriptions in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* show her to be an independent willed young woman.

To summarise, Durlabhvardhana was a man who belonged to an independent tradition of the Naga people or the serpent-worshippers. He worked as an

accountant in King Baladitya's administration. He married Princess Anangalekha out of mutual love affair or consciously and became the king of Kashmir after Baladitya's death. It would be incorrect to link him with any particular caste or Vedic Varna. His journey to the throne wasnot easy either. We will discuss that in the next chapter.

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Footnotes

a. In ancient India, there were many Naga communities. They produced several ruling dynasties, who ruled for a long time. The family of ShishuNaga, the king of Magadh Kingdom,is the first ruling Naga dynasty in the known history. During his time, Chhattisgarh was also ruled by the Naga people. The *Puranas* provide the names of many Naga kings, including one in Vidisha and another at Padmavati. The latter's family was in power for about two centuries at the beginning of the Christian era. This family is known in the history as the NavNaga family. The Naga kings were destroyed by the Shaka invaders. Even in southern India, there were several smaller kingdoms of the Nagas. The Nagas in Maharashtra called themselves Maharatthi. During the Satvahanas, the Kalalaya Nayak's vast kingdom included the Telangana, Karnataka and Eastern Maharashtra regions. In northern India, the Bharshiva Nagas ruled for a long time.

(Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosh, Vol IV, Ed. Pt. Mahadevshastri Joshi*,* Bharatiya Sanskriti KoshMandal*, 1988, pp 749)*

b. The Shudras wasnot the name of the native Indians but of a tribe dwelling on the banks of River Sindhu. A group of Vedic refugees under the leadership of Videgh Mathava came from Afghanistan and took shelter in the kingdom of these Shudras. They assumed that India is a land of the Shudras. In the Prakrit literature, the Shudra community is mentioned as 'Sudda' and this must be the original name because the word Shudradoesnot find etymology in the Vedic or Sanskrit language. Also, the name appears only once in the Rigveda and that too in the Purush Sukta. This means the Vedic Aryans came into contact with these people for the first time

and having proved benefactors of the Aryans, the Vedic Aryans included them in the cosmic society.

Evidence is available that a tribe named Shudra (Sudda) lived in the northwestern parts of India in the northern Sindh. A historian accompanying Alexander the Great, Diodoros, during his India expedition,described the battle with the 'Sodrai' people in Sindh and the city of Alexandria established by Alexander there on the banks of a river.*(The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great-As described by Arrian, Q Curtius, Diodoros, Plutarch and Justin,* edited by J. W. Mcrindle, page 354*)*

The name Sodrai, the scholars agree, is the corrupt Greek form of original word Sudda. Alexander invaded India in the 4th century BC. That means the community existed in that region till that time. Historian Ram Saran Sharma corroborates this fact saying, "There is no doubt that as a tribe, the Shudras existed in the 4th century BC." *(Sudras in Ancient India: A Social History of the Lower Order Down to Circa AD 600* by RS Sharma*).*

The Mahabharata has a repeated mention of the Shudra tribe, along with the Abhiras. Before Yudhishthira's coronation, when Nakul had gone to conquer the North, the chief of the Shudra tribe gave him gifts. In the Great War though, the Shudras fought for Duryodhana, along with the Abhiras. Historian Gyanchand Chauhan has observed that considering the number of times the Shudra tribe is mentioned in various places, it is quite clear that it was a prosperous tribe in the Sindh region during the Mahabharata period. (*Some Aspects of Early Indian Society,* by Gian Chand Chauhan, page 54*)*

The above references show that Shudra was the name of a particular tribe in Sindh. Even within Sindh, there were many other independent tribes such as the Abhiras, the Shibis, et al. Likewise, there were different tribes inhabiting the rest of India.They had no connection whatsoever with the Shudra tribe and as such, no reason to call themselves Shudras as well.

Later, however, the Vedic people started calling every non-Vedic community as Shudras.That became the root cause of the social ills in India, which she is still grappling with.

"Originally, Shudra must have been the name of some tribe. Later,the name was used to denote anyone who was not Aryan, not Vedic and who was outside of the three Varnas, including foreigners. The *sutras* (Vedic literature) regarded anyone not belonging to the three Varnas, as a Shudra," states Devdatta Bhandarkar *(Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture,* By DRBhandarkar, 1989, page 12.*)* Even VK Rajwade, in his foreword to the *Radha Madhav Vilas Champu,* says that, "The name Shudra was used to denote the society that existed outside of the three Varnas." It is the biggest mistake in the theological history of India that the Indian society, comprising various communities following the traditional, pre-

Vedic Shiva and Shakti dominant religion, was given a generic name Shudras, which, in fact, was that of a singular tribe.

c. Shreni, Kula, Puga and Gana, the associations formed by the businessmen, manufacturers, farmers and animal husbandry professionals for their respective professions define a long period in the economic history of India. The shrenis of numerous professions such as cobblers, basket weavers, goldsmiths, etc and the traders of various kinds existed in India from the Sindhu civilisation time. These professional guilds or associations regulated their respective professions, trained the newcomers, controlled the quality of the output, regulated the prices and represented the trade in the royal court. Besides,they also had the powers to accept deposits, grant loans and mint coins. Such coins up to the 3rd century CE have been found.

In the Sindh-Gandhar region, a Shreni was known as Nigam or Nekam. If India was economically prosperous right since the Sindhu civilisation, a large part of the credit goes to these autonomous professional Shrenis. They also conducted trade with foreign countries, besides handling the domestic market. The Buddhist Jataka tales vividly describe the wealth of the Shrenis. We understand the extent of their prosperity through the various donation inscriptions. Every new profession or business when it came into existence formed its own Shreni. People changed their professions freely and identified themselves with their current profession.

The members of the Shrenis elected their president through ballot. The president was known as the Setthi or Shreshthi. The presidentship, therefore, was not hereditary. The Shreshthi, irrespective of his particular profession or trade, enjoyed a great respect in society as well as at the royal court. Each Shreni and Kula had its own independent judiciary system and had the powers to decide their cases and take action against the guilty. During the Gupta rule, however, the Vedic religion received royal patronage.Thereafter, the things changed. Many of the powers of the guilds, including mining and minting of coins were rescinded.Many of the professions such as cloth weaving, mining, etc were brought under the direct control of the state administration.

After the fall of the Gupta dynasty, feudalismgrew across the country.Gradually,the guild system began to collapse. Moreover, the constant wars brought a lot of restrictions on the trade. Even then, the system continued to function till about the 11th century CE. Starting with the year 1022, the country faced a series of famines and the centralised production and services were disrupted. The downward movement of the economy, coupled with frequent foreign invasions, caused the manufacture ring and service sector to scatter at the village level. This gave rise to the Balutedari or the Rayat system. The foreign rulers (especially the Muslims) imposed heavy taxes on the people not subscribing

to their faith and also took control of the exports. As a result, most of the businesses and professions remained limited to the local needs. The fallout of this was that competition became a dreadful thing and people stopped allowing others to enter their professions and businesses. The caste system of today was born out of this extremely undesirable economic and political environment.

(Hindu Dharma ani Vedic Dharmacha Itihas – Sanjay Sonawani. Prajakta Prakashan, 2018. pp 266 - 278*)*

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Chapter 2

Ascension to throne of Durlabhvardhana Pradnyaditya

There can be no doubt that the history of Kashmir, in its true sense, begins with the ascension to throne of Durlabhvardhana. This is because there are other contemporary evidences, which can be used to verify his reign. Chinese traveller Huen Tsang had visited Kashmir at his time.He has described the kingdom of Durlabhvardhana aka Pradnyaditya, extending beyond Kashmir. This means Durlabhvardhana stepped out of the Kashmir Valley to expand his kingdom.Later, Lalitaditya Muktapida took it to greater heights.

Of course, going by Kalhana's narration of history, Durlabhvardhana's ascension to the throne of Kashmir wasnot quite easy.Kalhana's description, though exaggerated at times and sheer versification of folk beliefs at places, cannot be discarded summarily. The folk memories acquire interesting additions over a period and the original can be obscured. Likewise, the information reached Kalhana as 'history' four centuries after Durlabhvardhana and his presentation of it to us through his versification and ethicisation efforts is interesting.But we can still unearth historical facts from it.

According to Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the last king of the Gonandiya dynasty, Baladitya did not have a son. He married off his only daughter Anangalekha to Durlabhvardhana, an ordinary officer in his administration. As Durlabhvardhana became the royal son-in-law, his status grew.He received an honorific Pradnyaditya. However, Anangalekha, in company of some loose women

and on account of her husband's docile nature, took to unethical behaviour, became unfaithful to him. One of Baladitya's ministers by the name Khankha caught her fancy.They started an affair in the privacy of the princess' quarters. Over time, Khankha grew bold. He started frequenting the royal private quarters using his official powers to cavort freely with his beloved.

This eventually made Anangalekha indifferent towards Durlabhvardhana and their marital relationship came under stress. Durlabhvardhana came to know about her unfaithfulness.He was saddened. Oncehe entered her bedroom late at night, he found her lying in the embrace of her paramour Khankha, fast asleep. They appeared to have had sex only a while ago. Enraged by the sight, he went forward to kill both.But his rational mind took over. He thought his anger was rooted in his love for her.If he wanted to sever those roots, he needs to remove the soil that held these roots, his jealousy, first. He realised that he, who becomes the master of his love and envy, can never have false hopes. Then he proceeded to write on the corner of Khankha's scarf,'You deserved to be killed but remember that I spared your life'. Then he left. When Khankha woke up and read the message, he realised that he owed his life to Durlabhvardhana's generosity and left. Thereafter, he forgot Anangalekha and worked only to repay his debts towardDurlabhvardhana. After Baladitya's death,the issue of his succession arose. Khankha supported Durlabhvardhana and had him coroneted. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 3, 489-530)

It is quite evident that Kalhana, while narrating the story of the commoner Durlabhvardhana's coronation, has added ethics to it and has made it poetic. The fact that he is describing the event 400 years post facto raises serious doubts about its veracity. As there is no other source available to cross-check it. Even then, let us attempt to do the exercise using the information made available through other sources as well as our judgment and try to dig out facts.

Kalhana's narration itself raises a doubt if, indeed, Baladitya fixed the marriage of his daughter with Durlabhvardhana himself or it happened because of the young couple's love affair. The reason is, if, like Kalhana says, Baladitya had chosen Durlabhvardhana so as to avoid his kingdom falling into the hands of some other dynasty, there was no reason for his ministers to have any issue about his succession after his death. For the same reason, there would have been no need for Khankha to support Durlabhvardhana to repay his debt because Baladitya himself had declared that he is the future king.

The reason of choosing Durlabhvardhana that he was handsome appears flimsy. There must have been some other qualities in him as well for Baladitya to choose him. Maybe due to them, he was compelled to accept this marriage.Kalhana's description that Baladitya had married Anangalekha to Durlabhvardhana so as to avoid his kingdom falling into the hands of some other

dynasty is illogical because though he did not belong to any dynasty, Durlabhvardhana was still a stranger for Baladitya. Given the freedom-oriented societyof Kashmir in those days, it seems improbable that eligible youths would marry onparental orders. Therefore, we can take this logic of Kalhana as hearsay or an imagination of a historian.

The reason for this is, if we take Kalhana's story to be true, Anangalekha's unchaste conduct had started even when her father was alive. If that was so obvious, he should have at least noticed thatone of his own ministers is having an illicit relationship with his married daughter. But that doesnotseem to be the case from Kalhana's report.It is possible that Kalhana merely emulated his predecessors' style of describing real or imagined secret dalliances of the members of a royal family in verse.He has presented a folk tale in a decorative, poetic language.

Of course, it is easy to note fromKalhana's description that Anangalekha was an independent young woman. Even if we assume that she cheated on Durlabhvardhana while her father was still alive, still it is obvious that she was free willed. The fact that she agreed to marry a lowly employee of her father underscores her freedom of choice. From Kalhana's description itself, she doesnot come across as someone who would marry a boy of her father's choice. Besides,Kalhana doesnot tell us how much time elapsed between her marriage andBaladitya's death.During this period, beyond the interesting royal affair, what political or social events took place is also not known.

It is quite probable that the marriage between Durlabhvardhana and Anangalekha was a love marriage.Looking at the prevalent notions of freedom of the women in the contemporary Kashmiri society, her father either didnot opposeit or even if he did so mildly,the couple defied him. Letus now think about when exactly Anangalekha started being unfaithful to Durlabhvardhana.Even if she was indeed unfaithful, how and in what circumstances it happened.

Durlabhvardhana ascended the throne in 625 AD (According to some scholars, the year was 627 AD). Let us review the political situation of the northern and northwestern regions of India when he came to power and just before that.

The immediate neighbour of Kashmir, which could influence the politics of Kashmir, was the Kamboj kingdom. The Kamboj people are mentioned in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* and even in the *Manu Smriti* and the Mahabharata. This kingdom spread from the foothills of the Hindukush range east of Kabul to Rajauri near Kashmir.[1]

The kingdom of Kamboj was, in fact, a federation or a group of several independent states. These states came together to fight common enemies but functioned independently otherwise. Being leading horse breeders of the time, they were also known as 'Ashvak'. There is a difference of opinion among scholars

about the exact geographical boundariesof this region. One of the reasons for this could be that different states within this federal kingdom were annexed by the surrounding kingdoms outside the federation from time to time making it difficult for the historians to understand its boundaries at any given time. The individual states in this kingdom belonged to different hilly tribes.Each of these communities had developed its own unique culture. Even Greek historian Ptolemy has noted the existence of the Kamboj Federation of States and it being historic.[2]These hilly-region communities were naturally warrior communities.

Taxila has been a world renowned centre of knowledge since ancient times. This ancient city is now a part of the Rawalpindi district of Pakistani Punjab. When its degeneration began, it was ruled by the Hunas and the Kidarites. The Hunas captured it after 470 AD. When Huen Tsang visited Taxila in 630AD, it had just become the vassal state of Kashmir. Earlier, it was under Kamboj or the White Hunas. Once upon a time, its capital was Kabul. This is the region near Gandhar towards north and is known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today. This being atribal region, it was ruled by the tribals, who were natural warriors. Because of their aggressive nature, they appear to have extended their boundaries between Punjab and Taxila. The constant invasions of the Hunas made it a troubled zone.It saw its rule and boundaries change quite frequently. The unrest and the invasions naturally affected Kashmir but before Durlabhvardhana, no Kashmiri ruler is known to have stepped out of the Valley to expand his kingdom. Historical evidence shows Durlabhvardhana to be the first such king.

Huen Tsang came to India via Kabul. His travelogue informs us that the kingdoms of Taxila, Simhapura, Orsa (Hazara), Poonch and Rajauri (Rajapuri) were the vassal states of Kashmir at the time. Huen Tsang's information briefly goes like this-[3]

Huen Tsang reached Taxila from Bolor (Gilgit-Baltistan) via Attockby crossing river Sindhu. According to the traveller, the region was inhabited by extremely savage and uncivilised tribes. He writes that these people are so arrogant that they seem to have never heard of something called humility.

Long ago, Taxila being an important centre of Buddhism, Huen Tsang doesnot tire of describing the city and the very many legends about it. However, he makes an important observation that the local ruling dynasty has now come to an end.The region is now under the rule of the king of Kashmir. He also notes that the feudal lords are constantly at war with each other for establishing their ascendancy.[4]

Huen Tsang went to the Simhapur kingdom east of Sindhu, from Taxila. This place was marked by its snow-capped mountains. Many researchers have tried to locate Simhapur, the capital of the eponymous kingdom. Huen Tsang recorded that the capital was 140 miles (700 Li) from Taxila. According to Cunningham,

Huen Tsang may have visited a holy place of the same name, along with a Jain ascetic.[5]

Though the scholars who tried to understand the location of this town have failed, Huen Tsang says that the kingdom itself is known as Simhapura. He also describes the people, crops and the folk life of the kingdom. He notes that there is a stupa built by Ashoka here. Now, the capital town is forgotten but there is enough scope to fix the location of the kingdom, which is, midway between Taxila and Kashmir, on the banks of Sindhu and in the Salt Range area, rich in mineral salts. The information that Simhapura was a vassal state of Kashmir is important.[6]The Chinese traveller later arrived in Orsa. Today,this region is a part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and is known as Hazara,the corrupt form of the old name Orsa, according to several scholars, including Stein.[7]This is also a hilly region,situated before the confluenceof rivers Sindhu and Bipasha. Huen Tsang hasnot described this part in detail because the people here werenot Buddhists. However, he notes that this region too is a vassal state of Kashmir.[8]

Huen Tsang reached Kashmir in 631 AD going south from here, by crossing several mountains and passes along the way. In the beginning of his Kashmir journey, he notes that though the neighbouring kings tried to win Kashmir by attacking it, they never met with success. Six years had passed since Durlabhvardhana had become king. Tsang also notes that people of various faiths live here. They, he claims, are cunning but eager to learn new things.[9]He also records that there are 100 Sangharam (Buddhist monasteries) and 5,000 bhikkhus in Kashmir.He goes on to describe the history of Kashmir since its creation by using the existing myths moulding them in the Buddhist pattern.

He writes that Adhishthan (SriNagaar) is the capital of Kashmir.Earlier, it was called Puranadhishthan. According to scholars, the present day Pandresthan area of Srinagar, southeast of the Takht–e–Suleiman (Hari Parbat) is the ancient Puranadhishthan.[10]

When Huen Tsang arrived at the border of Kashmir, the maternal uncle of the king (Durlabhvardhana) went to receive him. The Chinese traveller was given a royal welcome and a procession was taken out in his honour by taking him around on an elephant. The mother and the younger brother of the king were also present for this ceremony. When Huen Tsang reached the capital, the king himself went to receive him with his 1,000 commanders, the bhikkhus and the respected citizens of the capital.After allowing him to spend the night at the Hushka Vihara, he was invited to stay in the palace. He was given five servants to take his care.He was provided with clerks to help him copy manuscripts. Huen Tsang stayed in Kashmir for two years from 631 to 633 AD. He visited many Buddha Viharas and Stupas during his stay.

He returned from Kashmir via Rajapur (Rajauri), which was the capital of a kingdom that existed then in today's Jammu region. Huen Tsang notes that this kingdom is a vassal state of Kashmir.There is no local king here. He also writes that there are numerous temples here.Since there are no Buddhists, most of the population was infidel.[11]

All these kingdoms were small in size but geographically, they surrounded the Kashmir Valley. Therefore,they had a lot of influence on politics, trade and economics of Kashmir. These kingdoms belonged mainly to warrior communities.Therefore, it is obvious that had they not created some trouble, there wouldnot have been any need for the king of Kashmir to come out of the Valley and subdue them. It is notable, therefore, that the expansion of the Kashmiri kingdom that took place during Durlabhvardhana's reigndismisses the belief that the Kashmiris are weak and gullible. It is also noteworthy that even Shriharsha had not been able to establish his ascendancy in these areas. In fact, there are many exaggerated notions about Shriharsha's expansion of his empire, but more about that later.

Kalhana doesnot inform us at all about this mission and expansion of the Kashmiri kingdom. We do not know whether the mission was devised by Durlabhvardhana himself or Baladitya led it with the help of Durlabhvardhana inhis final days. He is also silent about Huen Tsang's visit and the two-year stay in Kashmir. In hindsight, we can say that either the information didnot reach Kalhana through his sources or that he didnot deem it important enough to record it. Maybe these kinds of omissions are the casualties of writing history in a poetic form. The fact, however, remains that he didnot write anything about Durlabhvardhana's efforts to expand his kingdom.

Overall, the report of Huen Tsang gives an impression that these kingdoms had been annexed to Kashmir quite recently. Durlabhvardhana came to power in 625 AD and Huen Tsang visited the region in 630 AD.So, the probability that Durlabhvardhana had undertaken the mission soon after he took over the reins of Kashmir is pretty high. Even considering that it had begun towards the end of Baladitya's reign, it is obvious that Durlabhvardhana had led it because of Baladitya's advanced age.

If Durlabhvardhana had left Kashmir on this mission to expand his kingdom, he was perhaps away for a long period.In his absence, Anangalekha's affair may have started. Though the story written by Kalhana is not entirely improbable, his claim that the minister Khankha helped him take the throne appears to be untrue. This is because it was obvious that Durlabhvardhana would ascend the throne being Baladitya's son-in-law and even Baladitya wanted him to do so. Besides, through his expansion of kingdom, Durlabhvardhana had proved that he deserved the kingship, whether before Baladitya's death or after. So, it is unlikely that he

needed help of a minister to become the king. If any other powerful elements such as the Damaras, the Tantrins, etc had tried to block him, Durlabhvardhana was very well capable of crushing them.However, there is no evidence to prove that. It is clear that this is one of Kalhana's moral tales and not a fact.

Thanks to Huen Tsang, who made available the evidence of his visit, we get some details of the founder of the Karkotaka dynasty. Though in his peculiar style he did not name this great king of Kashmir, evidence of the same is available in the form of another contemporary Chinese source, which tells us the importance of Durlabhvardhana as a ruler.

The Chinese documents reveal that during 627-649 AD, Tu-lo-pa (Chinese name for Durlabhvardhana) had established his control over the route between China and Kabul (Kipin). This had enabled the Chinese ambassadors to travel freely on this route.[12]He may have had ascendancy on the Gilgit-Baltistan region as well.

This means that even though Durlabhvardhana didnot rule Kabul directly, his political influence did exist in that region because of his annexing the surrounding regions within a couple of years after coming to power. This had compelled the Chinese to take note of him thus. When Huen Tsang embarked on his return journey, he had camped at Udbhandpur in the Kapish (Kabul) kingdom. Huen Tsang wrotethat the king of Kashmir had come personally to see him off. This record throws light on the political relations between Kashmir and Kabul in those days.[13]Udbhandpur was the secondary capital of Kabul and was ruled by a Hindu king. Of course, the Hindu/Buddhist kings in this valley were influenced by the Tokhari (Turkish) culture and language. Like everywhere else, the Hindus and the Buddhists in this region had friendly relations but aggressiveness was the hallmark of the tribal life here.

To keep Kashmir safe on all sides and to avoid nuisance, Durlabhvardhana had decided to leave the Kashmir Valley and by expanding his kingdom, exert his political influence on the surrounding regions. That was a strategy he had devised and implemented, as we can see. Lalitaditya took this visionary strategy to the hilt.

A contemporary powerful king of Durlabhvardhana was Harshavardhana having his capital at Kanyakubja (Kanauj). In 606 AD, when he was just sixteen, he came to power and ruled the Kanauj kingdom till 647 AD. Prabhakarvardhana, who established a small kingdom of his own at Thanesar,was the founder of this dynasty. By his time, the Gupta dynasty was nearing its end under the onslaught of the Hunas from the northwest frontier. After the fall of the Guptas, several smaller states came up across the northern parts of India due to rise in feudalism.

The kingdom of Thanesar was one among them. This place in today's Haryana state was also suffering from the invasions of the Hunas. During the troubled times, Harsha's sister Rajyashri was married to the king of Kanyakubja,

Grihavarman. King of Gaud kingdom (Northwest Bengal) Shashank attacked Kanyakubja, defeated and killed Grihavarman and abducted his widow Rajyashri. This incident gave a different turn to the history of North India. Rajyavardhan, the elder brother of Harshavardhan and king of Thanesar by succession, had to abandon his fight with the invaders of northwest and go east to get back his sister. When he attacked Shashank, the latter called him for discussion and killed him. This necessitated the coronation of Harshavardhan at a young age of 16 years. As soon as he came to power, he declared a war against Shashank and garnered support of many other kings to take back Kanauj. That victory,however, was not decisive because Shashank continued to trouble Harsha. When Shashank died in 620 AD, Bhaskarvarman and Harsh divided his kingdom between them.

Bhaskarvarman belonged to the Varman dynasty and was the ruler of Kamrup (600-650 AD). He had a military pact with Harsha. Later, Harshavardhanembarked on creating an empire and he became a powerful emperor in North India. Even then, according to Radha Kumud Banerjee, he never fought wars without reason or out of vengeance. Though he was a Shaivite, he had been benevolent to all religions. It is possible that he had converted to Buddhism in his later years. He enjoyed an important place in the northern India as a power centre but there is a lot of exaggeration in how big his empire really was. His history is mired in myths and legends as well.

Most of the historians say that Harsha ruled Kashmir, even if nominally, and Kashmiri historians are no exception to this opinion.[14]However, Huen Tsang, who lived in Kashmir proper between 631 to 633 AD and in the regions under Kashmir for even longer period, does not mention it being ruled by any other power. Even other Chinese sources inform that Durlabhvardhana ruled from Kashmir to Kabul. This renders the opinion meaninglessthat Kashmir was a vassal state of Kanauj.

It would be interesting to see how scholars formed their aforesaid opinion about Harsha ruling Kashmir. At the time, a tooth of Buddha was preserved in a stupa in Kashmir as a holy relic. Harshavardhan sought the relic.Durlabhvardhana granted his request. Some historians have strangely deduced from this incident that Durlabhvardhana was a vassal king of Harshavardhan, howsoever nominally.

The tooth of Buddha was in Kashmir at least till 633 AD. By then, Harshavardhan had established himself as a great emperor. Huen Tsang had seen the tooth. He says,“There is a stupa south of a mountain at a distance10 Li from the new and old capitals of Kashmir.In that stupa, there is a one-and-a-half inch long, yellowish white tooth of Buddha. It gets illuminated on auspicious days.[15]

The tooth doesnot seem to have attracted the attention of Shriharsha, who came to power in 606 AD, till at least 633 AD. This means Harsha had converted to Buddhism sometime after this, if at all. The reason for calling him a Shaivite is that the three drama books in his name are entirely influenced by Shaivism. From

his royal seals, his ancestors appear to be Sun worshippers. In his grantinscription,he calls himselfParam Maheshwar'. It is believed that he wrote three plays by the names *Ratnavali*, *Nagaananda* and *Priyadarshika*. *Nagaananda* among them has been dedicated to Shiva's consort Uma. Even Banabhatta calls hima Shaivite.[16]

Huen Tsang says that Harsha constructed thousands of stupas on the banks of river Ganges and gave handsome donations to Buddha Viharas. He had banned killing of animals in his kingdom. We have to take into consideration the exaggeration-prone style of writing of Huen Tsang in this respect. This could mean that either Harsha adopted Buddhism in his later years or without converting to it, he may have adopted a liberal policy towards Buddhism, like the Satvahanas. The latter option appears more probable.

It is possible that Huen Tsang informed Harsha about the holy tooth. He has given fantastic information about the Buddha relic in Kashmir in his travelogue. If we remove the fantasy part from it, it is possible that Ashoka or Kanishka may have taken the holy relic to Kashmir and constructed a stupa around it. The tradition of constructing stupas over the holy relics of Buddha gathered momentum from Ashoka. After becoming a Buddhist or after Huen Tsang informed him about it, Harsha may have sought it from Durlabhvardhana, to add to his religious glory.

According to Huen Tsang, on seeing the relic, Harsha sought permission to worship it, from the king of Kashmir. However, the local bhikkhus strongly opposed it and hid the relic. However, looking at the excellent character of Harsha, Durlabhvardhana decided to grant his request and recovered the tooth from the bhikkhus to gift it to Harsha.[17]

Even if we take this to be true it doesnot show that the king of Kashmir i.e. Durlabhvardhana, was the vassal king of Harshavardhan. Moreover, in the diplomatic relationships, such requests are routinely made. In fact, we find the Buddha relics gifted to Buddhist nations to strengthen the diplomatic relations even in the last century. However, a notable thing here is that we do not get any indication of the stupa, where Harsha installed the tooth brought from Kashmir. Therefore, this might be a myth after all.

However, even if Shriharsha requested for the tooth of Buddha and Durlabhvardhana accepted it, it doesnot mean that he was the vassal king, even nominally, of Shriharsha.The scholars seem to have overlooked this fact. To prove their opinion, they have taken help of a general statement by Banabhatta. In his book *Harshacharita*, Banabhatta says, Harsha had received a gift from a remote snow-covered region.[18]

The description 'a remote snow-covered region' does not apply to Kashmir alone. Some experts opine that Banabhatta could have meant Nepal. This opinion is not tenable either. Since Banabhatta has not explicitly mentioned Kashmir, all

that we can say that this was an exaggeration by the court poet of Harsha. This is because forget historical, not even a poetic reference is found about Harsha's army entering Kashmir or a war taking place there, during his expansion expedition. As there is no concrete evidence to prove Kashmir being a vassal state of Kanauj, we can say that it was an independent, sovereign state.

Shriharsha died in 647 AD. Huen Tsang was in Kashmir till at least 633 AD. Harsha appears to have spent most of his time after 633 AD in the conflicts with Pulkeshi and in organising the Buddhist religious councils. Therefore, the question of when he established his ascendancy over Kashmir remains unanswered.

Pulkeshi (II) of the Chalukya dynasty in the south caused a lot of trouble for Harsha through his military aggressions.Huen Tsang, who had visited his kingdom circa 641-42 AD, corroborates this. The Aihole inscription of Pulkeshi informs how he intimidated Harsha.[19]Though Banabhatta hasnot described Harsha's defeats, other contemporary sources confirm them. Even Huen Tsang says that since Maharashtra didnot accept Harsha's sovereignty, Harsha gathered all his powerful commanders and tried to subdue and win Maharashtra but he failed in it.[20]

This shows that this incident had happened before Huen Tsang'svisit toMaharashtra.In short, many stories about the empire of Shriharsha are imaginary and it is not desirable to let them influence history writing.

Even though Kashmir's kingdom extended outside the Valley, it was still smaller than the Kanauj Empire. However, since it was situated in the remote and treacherous mountain ranges and it had to bear with the onslaught of the invaders first, we ought to understand that its sovereign status is valuable in the history of the Indian subcontinent.

Durlabhvardhana was an important ruler, who fended off the invasions from the northwest and expanded his kingdom outside of the Valley. Shriharsha, who remained engaged with the powers in the east, west and south, history tells us that he neither had grip over the northwest nor did it attract his attention. Even accepting his importance in the history, one has to say that Shriharsha's motivation was retribution for his family and not of nation-building. Yet, the Indian historians never realised that in according importance to the kingdoms of the plains of central and northern India out of a soft corner for them, they were being partial to the other kingdoms for no reason.

In short, Durlabhvardhana was an independent ruler. He was the first to extend Kashmir's borders beyond the valley. Even China had to take cognisance of his power. Surprisingly, none of these things have come in Kalhana's narration. Either the information didnot reach him or if it did, he did not realise its importance. Whatever personal and mythical information he provides about

Durlabhvardhana is all that is available to us. Let us now quickly review the remaining part of it as well.

Kalhana further says that Durlabhvardhana received the earth (kingdom) and his royal lover Anangalekha from the Gonandiya dynasty. Owing to her husband covering up her bad qualities, Anangalekha's status and fortune grew. She constructed a vihara named Anangabhavan. As the astrologers had said that their son Malhan will be short-lived, Durlabhvardhan constructed the Malhanswami temple in his son's childhood. He installed the idol of Vishnu in Sringar with the name Durlabhaswami. After ruling for36 years thus, the king died. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 2-6).

The coherent history of Kashmir begins with Durlabhvardhana. One cannot deny that he was the king, who, despite his humble background, showed vision and gave Kashmir its pride. He came to power at a time when the political situation in the state was highly volatile. He instilled imperious policy in his soldiers, otherwise deemed diffident and coward, and extended the boundaries of Kashmir. He turned it into a powerful state. This is Durlabhvardhana's extraordinary achievement. He erased the prevalent image of Kashmir. During his rule, as we can see, Kashmir began to prosper and even its trade and commerce grew.

His religious policy was liberal. Though he was originally a Shaivite, he treated the Buddhists and the Vaishnavas equally. Overall, this was a happy period of Kashmir. Coins bearing Durlabhvardhana's name have also been found in the Kashmir Valley. His name 'Durlabhadev' is found inscribed on them. They are crude like those of the other rulers of this dynasty, but they are striking.[21]

This founder of a dynasty and a king with an indomitable spirit, Durlabhvardhana, Pradnyaditya, died in the year 661 AD. It is important to take a look now at the kings of the Karkotaka dynasty till the power came down to Lalitaditya Muktapida. Without that we would not be able to appreciate the adverse times, in which Lalitaditya came to power. Rather, we will not be able to understand how the history of Kashmir is strongly linked to the history of India.

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Footnotes-

The tenures of the Karkotaka dynasty kings and the exact year,in which each of them came to power, have been debated a lot. The reason is though Kalhana has given the information about the tenures of all the kings, he has not given the exact years of their accession of the throne. With the assumption that a later day Karkotaka king Chippat Jayapida died in the Laukika Samvatsara 3889 or 813 AD as the base and doing a reverse calculation of the tenure of each king, the scholars had fixed the year of Durlabhvardhana accession to be 600 AD. Many historians

appear to have taken this as the year of Durlabhvardhana's coronation. However, this timeline doesnot match with the records of the Tang dynasty.There is a difference of at least 25 years as it was found later. To solve this problem, it was decided to push forward the coronation of Durlabhvardhana by 25 years. However, that meant the last king of the Karkotaka dynasty was ruling in the year 880 AD, whereas, in reality, that was the time of Avantivarman, which is known with certainty. Perhapsthe reason behind this is thatKalhana has given the tenures of some of the Karkotaka kings more than they actually were. So, the historians, seeing that there is a discrepancy of 25, 29 to 31 years in the tenure of every ruler of the Karkotaka dynasty, linked the tenures to the Roman calendar and solved the problem.[22]

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21) *Culture and Political History of Kashmir*, Volume 1by PNK Bamzai, MD Publications Pvt Ltd, 1994pp117.
22)*Culture and Political History of Kashmir*, Volume 1, By PNK Bamzai,MD Publications Pvt Ltd,pp118

Chapter 3

Up to Lalitaditya...

After Durlabhvardhana, his son Durlabha (or Durlabhaka) came to power. On becoming king, he adopted the honorific Pratapaditya. Though the year of his ascension, 661 AD, is conjectural, it is fairly close to reality.

Pratapaditya enjoyed a long reign of 50 years. His tenure was by and large peaceful and one of prosperity. He doesnot appear to have made any attempt to expand his kingdom. However, he protected the already extended boundaries of Kashmir. He was feared by the enemies. His rule took Kashmir to the peak of prosperity. Traders from many countries frequented his kingdom. He had an efficient minister by the name Audsuta. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 9-11). He also undertook a lot of constructions. The long-standing peace not only brought prosperity, it initiated creation of knowledge and buildings as well. Various

religions and sects also prospered. At a time when Buddhism was on a decline in the rest of India, it took strong roots in Kashmir.

The political relations of Kashmir had with Kabul-Gandhar, Pakhtunistan's Hindu and Buddhist shahis (principalities), including Tokharistan remained unaffected. During his time, there was no powerful king in North India. In central India, a kind of political vacuum had begun to form. Harshavardhan having died without a son, the Kanauj Empire had disintegrated into several individual feudal states. The most powerful among the kingdoms, Magadha was comparatively in a better shape.But Bengal had almost descended into anarchy. It is true that he did not take advantage of this situation to expand his rule over regions from North Punjab to Sindh to Multan.

Even then, it appears that the cultural expansion work was widespread in his times of peace and prosperity. There is a lot of room to say that this period helped Kashmir become well established as the centre for creation of philosophies in Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Buddhism.

Buddhism reached Central Asia and Tibet-China from Kashmir. The number of missionary bhikkhus that went to China from Kashmir alone was several times more than those from the rest of India. Scholars from all over the world preferred to visit Kashmir during their visit to India for learning more about Buddhism.

A peculiarity of this Buddhism is the clear influence of Shaivism on it. In fact, it was a new Buddhism withthe blending of Shaivism.It was developed by the Kashmiri scholars. The Buddhism that went past the Himalayan ranges is the creation of the Kashmiri scholars. The gods and goddesses like Avalokiteshwar and Manjushri were included in Buddhism under the influence of the Hinduism, whose chief deities were Shiva and Shakti. Because of the Shiva-like nature of Kashmir, the Kashmiri scholars took a broader view of religion and brought the various religious traditions together. Though this tradition had begun to certain extent earlier, it received tremendous boost during the peaceful rule of Pratapaditya.

Even though the Buddhist literature had been reaching China since the second century BC, Buddhism had not taken roots there. Emperor Ashoka was a strong supporter of Buddhism.Though he had constructed stupas and chaityas in Kashmir, according to Kalhana (or the traditional history of Kashmir), Ashoka was a staunch Shaivite.He used to worship Lord Shiva at Harmukh Ganga. There is a record of his constructing a Shiva temple Ashokeshwar. Kalhana tells us that he had obtained a son by worshipping Lord Shiva. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*1, 102-107).

Ashoka's son Jalauk later came to the throne of Kashmir. He too was a staunch Shaivite and regularly worshipped Lord Shiva in the Bhutesh and Vijayeshwar temples. Initially, he was an anti-Buddhist but later he softened his

stand towards Buddhism. In short, the initial conflicts between the Buddhists and the Shaivites didnot go on forever. It would be incorrect to say that Kalhana decided that Ashoka was a Shaivite since he was himself a Shaivite, because considering the religious tolerance and liberal outlook towards various religions, the possibility of Ashoka actually being a devotee of Shiva cannot be negated.

Jain sources say that Emperor Chandragupta Maurya had adopted Jainism in his later years. Bindusar, the emperor who followed Chandragupta, was the proponent of the Ajivak philosophy (the then main part of the Shraman philosophical tradition). In those days, instead of religious fanaticism or conversions, bringing about a natural change in the philosophy (opinion) was considered more important. As a result, there was no issue with carrying more than one religious faith simultaneously. In a sense, this period can be called the most tolerant and liberal. We find most of the Kashmiri kings fervently nurture this tradition for a long time.

The Kashmiri scholars gave birth to an entirely new religious philosophy by combining the religious principles of Shaivism and Buddhism.[1]In this way, Kashmir had become an influential centre of philosophy.This status continued even after the Indo-Greek period. Really speaking, the Kashmiri missionaries took their unique Buddhism to China much more than what the Chinese travellers did. The missionaries Samghabhuti, Gautamsamgha and Kumarjeeva went to China as early as the fourth century AD. The king of China was so impressed by Kumarjeeva's talent that he actually kidnapped him and by detaining him in China, got him to translate over a hundred Buddhist manuscripts into the Chinese language. This tradition continued unbroken till the time of the Karkotaka dynasty.

During Pratapaditya's tenure, a bhikkhu named Ratnachinta visited China (693 AD). It is said that he belonged to the royal family.But we do not know his exact relationship with Pratapaditya. He may well have been a relative of the king of a friendly kingdom north of Kashmir.He may have moved on after completing his studies in Kashmir. He established a monastery in China as well and translated seven Sanskrit books into Chinese.

Chinese and Tibetan language translations of many books was done and were taken to Tibet and China by the scholars of the Kashmir Valley. This cultural/religious contact was bound to have an impact on the political relations. Since Kashmir's contact with the Central Asia was ancient, there were cultural exchanges between them as well. According to some researchers, the sun worship came to Kashmir in ancient times from Central Asia. However, the Naga-worshipping community in Kashmir believed that they were descendants of the sun.So, even though one can estimate that the sun worship in Kashmir had started independently, it would be worthwhile to consider that the importance of the sun in the Karkotaka dynasty increased due to the influence of Central Asia.

Because the Kashmiris kept adopting various religious thoughts and cultural traditions, this otherwise small land didnot just become culturally rich, it proved to be influential for the then known world.

Though there were not many notable events recorded in Pratapaditya's tenure, far away in Arabistan, Islam had been born. The aggressive Islamic policy adopted by Prophet Mohammad continued after him. Syria and Egypt were taken over (634-638 AD). The Umayyad Caliphate carried on the aggressive Islamic policy. Roughly in the same year as that of Pratapaditya's ascension to the throne, the Arab infighting came to an end and as per the Hasan-Muawiya treaty, Muawiyabecame the Caliph. He then pushed the Islamic conquests policy further. Though it was quite clear that ultimately this policy was going to endanger the security of the northwest part of India, because of the spread of the Shahi rulers from Tokharistan to Zabul-Kabul-Gandhar, no contemporary Indian ruler appears to have given it much thought. In fact, we can say that northwest India remained oblivious of or even disinterested in the shift in the religious-political powers and the wars.

The coins of Pratapaditya have been found not just in the Kashmir Valley but in Punjab as well. The coins carrying a seal 'ShriPratap' are his and they are regarded as the indicator of the extensive political and economic area of influence of Kashmir. In fact, it appears that the Kashmiri kingdom had spread up to Jalandhar in Punjab.Because later when Yashovarman came to power in Kanyakubja (Kanauj), the northern border of his kingdom had extended till Jalandhar.The dispute over boundary arose between Kashmir and Kanauj. However, it doesnot seem to have resulted in any hostility. Kalhana also says that king, as his name Pratapaditya suggests, was quite valiant and had troubled his enemies to a great extent.

He also established a town by the name Pratapapur (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*4, 10). This town is known as Tapar today. It is 29 km west of Srinagar. In the excavations done here, remnants of large temples and houses have been found. The remnants give us an idea of the original grandeur of the town.[2]

(A coin of Pratapaditya (II)

Pratapaditya is himself an example of the free and liberal social life not just in Kashmir but in India. As mentioned earlier, the discriminatory Vedic social system was yet to have its grip on society. The closed and hierarchical Hindu caste system of today didnot exist then. Neither women had an inferior status nor was there the notion of higher or lower status based on one's birth. To understand this, let us see the romantic tale about Pratapaditya's marriage as given in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*.

During Pratapaditya's tenure, the trade and commerce in Kashmir had prospered, causing many businessmen from various countries to come and settle there. Among them was Nona, a moneylender from the Rohit (Rohtak) kingdom. This moneylender had constructed a mutt for the Brahmins coming from his country. Once, Pratapaditya invited Nona to his palace. Playing a good host, the king asked him to stay over for a day. Later, Nona invited the king to his house. When Pratapaditya went to Nona's house, he was shocked to see his wealth. The king stayed with Nona for a couple of days.

During his stay, the king happened to see Nona's extremely beautiful wife Narendraprabha. Her extraordinary beauty left Pratapaditya infatuated to her. Narendraprabha noticed the feelings the king had developed for her. She too had been attracted to him. Even after returning to the palace, Pratapaditya remained obsessed with Narendraprabha. The women in his seraglio did not interest him anymore. He also felt ashamed that he desired someone else's wife. The king was caught between his love and his feeling of shame. Unable to bear the stress, he fell ill. Perhaps Nona had got a hint of the reason for the king's illness because he met Pratapaditya alone and said, "In such dire situations, it is not advisable to think about propriety (what people would say?). For our friendship, I can sacrifice not

just my sensual pleasure but even my life. I offer you Narendraprabha. In case, you find it awkward to accept her, I would dedicate her to a temple as a dancer.Then you can take her from there." After this discussion, the lovesick Pratapaditya decided to accept Narendraprabha.In due course, he married her. After that Narendraprabha built the Shri Narendreshwar Shiva temple. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*4, 11-38)

From the story above, it becomes clear that even though married, Narendraprabha could separate from her husband for her love and marry Pratapaditya. This means such marriages were prevalent. Nona, when he realised that Narendraprabha too was deeply in love with the king, instead of exercising his right over her, took the initiative to allow her to marry her lover. He also divorced her. This is an example of the contemporary social openness and liberal customs. Besides, since the caste system hadnot been established till then, there was no casteist obstacle as well to stop the marriage. There might be innumerable examples of such kind of marriages elsewhere, but like Kalhana (even if exaggerated to some extent),it was not recorded as facts.Hence, we donot find it. What we find instead are the fantasy-filled tales of the *Puranas*, which do not give an idea about the social life. Nevertheless, there are many examples of such marriages into the royal families even though the people involved belonged to different communities. But they are yet to be interpreted sociologically. However, we can easily conclude that at least till the 10thcentury, the caste system was an open, profession system.It didnot have the closed structure as it does today.

The two lived a happy and contented married life. This couple had three sons: Chandrapida, Tarapida and our hero of this book, Muktapida. After enjoying the kingdom for 50 years, Pratapaditya died. Though the year of Pratapaditya's death and the ascension to the throne of Chandrapida is not certain, historians estimate it to be somewhere between 711 and 713 AD.

However, politically, this period wasnot only hectic,the northwestern India suffered conquests by the foreign invaders too. The danger having reached the borders of Kashmir, to face it was the biggest challenge before the new king Chandrapida.

Arabian invasions and the valiant Chandrapida

The first invasion of the Arabs happened in 711 AD. Mohammad bin Qasim, the Arab commander, led it. The immediate cause of the conquest is said to be that the Medcommunity on the Makran shoreline in Balochistan was creating obstacles in the marine trade of the Arabs.It was involved in sea piracy. The Arab traders were finding it difficult to carry out their business from the Debal, Kachch and Kathewad ports due to this. The Sindh region was infested by small and large

tribes.It was relatively an economically poor region. The nuisance created by the tribes meant that the important land trade routes were also endangered. The Arabs had earlier tried to control the route passing through the Bolan and Khyber passes,but they had failed.

Around the same time, once, eight ships en route to Arabistan from Sri Lanka were caught in a storm and drifted towards the Debal port. This port, according to experts, is believed to be the present day Manora or Thatta port near Karachi. These ships were carrying valuable gifts sent by the king of Sri Lanka to Amir Al Hajjajof the Umayyad Caliphate at Basra.But they also had aboard women pilgrims going to Haj and some Abyssinian slaves, who were also a gift to the Amir. These ships headed for Arabistan were attacked and captured by the sea pirates near Debal. They appropriated the valuables and held the passengers captive in jail. Some of the passengers, however, managed to escape. Those who were jailed were asked to pay for their freedom. The ones who escaped went to Hajjaj and gave him an emotional account of the capture of the Muslim women. Incensed, Hajjaj asked the Caliph permission to attack Sindh. The Caliph dithered initially.

It is also said that after this incident, the Med-Baloch Sea piratesof Debal plundered the ship carrying the women and children of the Muslim soldiers, who had died in the Jihad in Africa, and held them captive. These Arab women as well as the Arab traders and workers were kept in a jail under the control of Debal Pratap Rai, a commander of King Dahar. A woman named Naheed escaped from the jail and wrote a letter to Amir Al-Hajjaj. When Hajjaj received the letter, he wrote to Dahar and demanded release of all the Arab prisoners in lieu of a ransom. However, Dahar replied to him that 'These prisoners are not in my control'.

The Umayyad Caliphate under Caliph Lehman bin Abd al Malik had become very powerful. For the Arabs, security of the trade route and the ports infested by the pirates was more important than freedom of the prisoners. At the same time, dealing with the rebels leaving the Caliphate had also become necessary. Besides, they wanted to end the military support of Dahar to the Sassanid rebels. Without that the Islamic expansion was not possible. The prisoners of the ship from Sri Lanka and the letter by the woman, who had escaped Dahar's prison, were merely one of the reasons.

In 710 AD, the Arabian army under Mohammad Qasim marched towards Sindh. Though still young, Mohammad bin Qasim was the son-in-law of Hajjaj. The objective of this conquest was not the promotion of Islam but to check the sea piracy, to take control of the important trade ports and to remove the hindrances to the trade. Moreover, this was the task of freeing the jailed Muslim women.[4]

Though this invasion was to be on Sindh, Qasim would have had to take over other regions along the way as well. We have already seen that there were

Hindu and Buddhist Shahis having their tribal and federal states in Kabul-Zabul, Helmand and Aranghab valley as well as Balochistan (Makaran). Their boundaries were connected with the then expanded Kashmir kingdom. Therefore, it was clear that even Kashmir would be affected by this invasion. The Arabs having already annexed the Balkh (Tokharistan) region, the abutting Kabul-Zabul were facing an immediate threat. These areas had Arab settlements since a long time. This region shared its boundaries with China.Most of the Chinese trade happened by this route. As a result, the Chinese commercial interests were in danger as well. In that sense, the threat of the Arab invasion was the threat to the entire central and southern Asia.

Unfortunately, not many records of the situation at the time of this invasion are available. There is also a difference of opinion about whether Mohammad bin Qasim came to Sindh by sea or by land route. From *Chach Nama*, it appears that Qasim left via Iran. It is also said that some units of soldiers joined him later by sea, at the Debal port. If he had come by land, the probability is high that he came through the Bolan Pass rather than the Khyber Pass because this is the route, which enters Makaran through Balochistan. Qasim's Indian adventures also appear to have begun from Makaran. Along this way, the Jat soldiers from Balochistan also joined him. Therefore, even if he had come through the Bolan Pass, one has to conclude that he came to Sindh by crossing Zabulistan, south of the Kabulistan region of the present day Afghanistan, before taking the Bolan Pass.

Zabulistan was a powerful kingdom. Though there are no historical records about how much it was affected by Mohammad bin Qasim's aggression, Chandrapida's movements indicate that it was affected to some extent. The political relations among Kabul, Zabul and Kashmir go back a long time. The Chinese court records show that after Qasim's invasion, Zabulistan established its political importance once again.

When Qasim's army reached the Zabul valley, it became imperative to put up a united front to fight the Arabs, in individual interests as well as for the sake of political relationships. Because of the aggressive policy of the Arabs, Chandrapida didnot just take part in these fights, he also tried to involve the Chinese as ultimately even the Chinese interests were also under threat. This was due to the near anarchy situation on the borders of Tokharistan. In order to protect those boundaries and to prevent the possible invasion of Kashmir as well as the other Shahi rulers, he sent his ambassador to the Chinese King Hiun Tsang (Xuanzong) of the Tang dynasty in 713 AD. His objective was to get the Chinese involved in his mission and thereby obtain their military support (the Chinese documents refer to Chandrapida as 'Chen-to li-pi-li'). However, this particular Tang king of China had just assumed power through a revolt.So, perhaps he couldnot attend to these external events immediately. There is no clear information in the Chinese

documents about the king lending any military support to Kashmir. So, it is obvious that Chandrapida didnot receive it. He had to undertake the work of fending off the Arabs invading India on his own. Of course, the possibility of the Kabul-Zabul rulers supporting him cannot be ruled out.

Even so, later, in the Sino-Tibetan conflicts, Chandrapida did extend military support and supplies to the Chinese. Although there were several individual and federal Hindu/Buddhist rulers in the region between Kabul-Zabul and Kamboj, we have seen that Kashmir controlled those routes. In the meantime, with his ardour for expansion, the Tibetan ruler was trying hard to encroach on these routes, forcing Kashmir to get involved into this conflict. It seems that in lieu of the military support and supplies given by Chandrapida during the fight with Tibet, the Chinese king sent a delegation to Kashmir in 720 AD to thank Chandrapida and declared him the 'official king' (honourable friend).[5]

Chandrapida proves to be an important, diplomatic ruler in the way he used his diplomatic relations with China and the Shahi rulers on the northwest frontier in his wars. It is a fact that because of his manoeuvres, Kashmir stayed safe not only from Qasim but also from Tibet.

Even though Qasim was successful in conquering Sindh by decimating its army in the battle on the banks of Sindhu and beheading its king Dahar, before reaching Sindh via Bolan Pass he had to deal with the resistance of the Shahi rulers as well as Chandrapida, who had joined their united front.

According to some sources, after killing Dahar, Qasim took his family in his custody but Dahar's beloved wife Ladi committed *johar*.However, some other sources quoting *Chach Nama* inform us that Qasim forcefully married Dahar's wife Ladi. As both incidents are in the realm of probability, we cannot make any definitive statement in this regard. Even though the rest of the family was jailed, Dahar's son Jaysimha managed to escape. Be that as it may, only Kashmir showed the courage to give him shelter.[6]

It appears that Jaysimha remained in Kashmir at least till Qasim returned, whereupon Jaysimha went back to his kingdom and established his rule there.

In Makran,when Arabs marched towards the north, the local tribes continued to resist the Arabs.In Sindh, the Jats also created a lot of nuisance for Qasim. According to Al Baladhuri (Al Baladhuri is the ninth century Arab historian and the post Chach Nama history is available to us in his book *Kitab Fatah al Buldan*), after conquering Sindh, Qasim had issued a fatwa to the kings of Hind that they should adopt Islam. Also, he sent his army to subdue the kings in the north. To avoid trouble, Saurashtra (Maitrak of Vallabhi) made a treaty with him. The Med people had already surrendered. Soon after the issuance of fatwa, a 10,000 strong army of Qasim marched towards Kanauj.

At the time, King Harchander was ruling Kanauj. When he received Qasim's order to surrender, he shot a strong letter in response. He said, "We don't detain envoys, else I would have shown you your place by chaining your envoy up." Then he said to the envoy, "Go back to your Amir and tell him he will see on the battlefield what we are capable of."

Though Qasim was incensed by this reply, his army general didnot dare to take any step against Kanauj.[7]

Since Kashmir had given refuge to Dahar's son Jaysimha, it was obvious that Qasim turned his attention to Kashmir. Qasim had himself left to invade Kashmir with the order of his Caliph in hand that the noblemen of that kingdom surrender to him. However, he could only reach the then border of Kashmir, i.e. Jalandhar in Punjab.[8]He had to face severe resistance of Chandrapida of Kashmir. Chandrapida stopped Qasim there with his skilled warfare and forced him to change his course.

To conquer Kashmir and to also get hold of Dahar's son Jaysimha, to whom the king of Kashmir Chandrapida had given shelter, remained a daydream for Qasim. He had been victorious at other places but had to retreat here.So,Qasimabandoned his adventure and turned towards Kangda in Himachal Pradesh. This kingdom finds mention in the Arab documents as 'Al Kiraj'.[9]Kangda was ruled by the rulers of the 'Kira' dynasty.

According to *Chach Nama*, Kangda had also sheltered Jaysimha for some time but one night, Janaki, the libidinous sister of the king, seduced Jaysimha and had sex with him. Later, fearing that her sinful act would come to light, she went to her brother and told him that Jaysimha had raped her. When Jaysimha came to know of this, he escaped from there and returned to Kashmir. However, the truthfulness of this account is doubtful. Nevertheless, it is true that Qasim attacked Kangda. This tiny kingdom could not survive his onslaught. It is possible that this conquest gave birth to the idea of the then powerful kingdoms of the north, Kashmir and Kanauj, coming together. The seeds of Lalitaditya and Kanauj King Yashovarman joining hands against the Arabs later seem to have been sowed here.

To defeat and force a strong and able general like Qasim to turn away from the border was indeed a brave act of Chandrapida. However, forget taking due cognisance of this, our historians usually donot even mention it, which is very unfortunate.

In 715 AD, Qasim was recalled to Arabistan. Soon after, he suddenly died. He stayed in India for a mere four years.However, during that time, the social life and the ruling powers in the northwest and western parts were completely devastated.

There are two stories about Mohammad Qasim's death. Al Baladhuri says, Mohammad Qasimwas killed in the family feud with the Amir (governor) of

Iraq.[10]According to *Chach Nama*, however, Surya and Premal, the two daughters of Dahar, whom Qasim had captured and sent over to the Caliph as gift, told the Caliph (falsely), 'We have been deflowered by none other than Qasim himself.We have been sent to you after he has had sex with us.' Hearing this, the Caliph, Lehman-bin-Abd-al-Malik, was outraged.Heforced Qasim to commit suicide by asphyxiation, by getting himself sewn into the cowhide.[11]It is difficult to say which one of them is true.

The tenure of Chandrapida appears to have begun with a war. Though he didnot succeed in achieving a decisive victory in this war, his significant accomplishment was that he could keep the boundaries of Kashmir extending up to Punjab safe. Actually, the mighty Arab army was equipped with the latest weaponry of that time. Their savageness in war and their discipline were the obstacles in resisting them successfully. Besides, the Islamic principle of Jihad was with Qasim. Even then, one can definitely say that the diplomatic Chandrapida succeeded in preserving the then boundaries and the independence of Kashmir.

Administration

Chandrapida's had an impartial administration. Though he did not let Kashmir be affected by external offensives, it is quite possible that Kashmir's commerce dipped during Qasim's invasions. Chandrapida appears to have based his internal administration on equality and freedom of the citizens. Kalhana has given an example of his even-handedness, which goes like this –

Chandrapida once decided to undertake the construction of Tribhuvanswami temple. There was a small hut of a cobbler on the land, where the temple was proposed to be built.The hut obstructed the work of the temple. The officials responsible for the construction asked the cobbler to vacate the land but he refused. The officials went to the king and explained to him the issue. Chandrapida reprimanded the officials asking how they began the construction work of the temple without obtaining permission of the cobbler.He told them to change the location of the temple. Then he sent his emissary to the cobbler. The messenger returned saying the cobbler wants to meet you outside the palace. The king agreed to do so. When the two met, the king asked the cobbler why he refused to vacate his hut. The cobbler replied, 'Just as you love your palace, I love my hut. However, if you come to me and request me properly, I would be give it to you.'

The king went to the cobbler's hut and requested him humbly to vacate the land and then, by paying him the appropriate compensation, took possession of the land.(Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*4, 55-80).

Chandrapida was the king.He could have easily penalised the cobbler for obstructing the work and acquired the land.But he didnot do so. What is also

notable here is that an ordinary cobbler could exercise his right to protect his legal possession of land, however small it was, even against the king. Even though Kalhana has embellished the story and has given it a puranic tone, it essentiallythrows light on Chandrapida's fair-mindedness.

Chandrapida had a wife named Prakashdevi. She built a vihara 'Prakashika' while Chandrapida built theVishnu temple 'Tribhuvanswami'. The story also shows religious liberalism and the individual freedom of worship and faith.

Kalhana has also recorded how the same even-handedness of Chandrapida cost him his life. Briefly, it goes like this –

During Chandrapida's tenure someone killed the husband of a Brahmin woman. The lady took up fast unto death (*Prayopaveshana*) to protest this. When the judicial officer (Dharmadhikari) learnt about it, he inquired into the matter and brought the lady to the king. She told the king that her husband had a dim-witted tantric colleague. Her husband being a brilliant man, the said colleague detested him.She suspected that he killed her husband. The king summoned the tantric. Since there was no physical evidence except the woman's belief, as per the custom of the middle age, the tantric was asked to prove his innocence through a miracle. In the miracle, the tantric Brahmin was found guilty. Because the tantric was a Brahmin (or because the miracle performed wasnot deemed enough to prove his guilt), he was fined and let off.

Tarapida, the younger brother of Chandrapida was greedy for power. He was perhaps unable to digest the elder brother's popularity. According to Kalhana, Tarapida hired the aforesaid tantric Brahmin, who was fined and hence hated Chandrapida, to kill Chandrapida using his black magic. Though Kalhana has called it black magic, it is a folk belief and it is obvious that Kalhana suggests here this was a murder. Kalhana informs us that a cruel brother overcome by his greed killed the enterprising, fair and fine king Chandrapida.

Some scholars maintain thatTarapida was oppressive.Unable to bear his excesses,many people had left the cities to settle down in smaller villages. However, a scrutiny of Tarapida's tenure tells us that Kalhana has exaggerated in this respect.

Let's see how.

Tarapida's tenure

In all, Chandrapida ruled Kashmir for eight years and eight months. After him, the mean and avaricious (according to Kalhana) Tarapida came to power. As soon as he took the throne, Tarapida killed thousands of his detractors. It is also said that because of his atrocities, people abandoned the cities and towns and

sought refuge in ravines and mountains.Kalhana doesnot write well of Tarapida anywhere.

However, information quite contrary and relatively more reliable is available.We ought to take cognisance of it. During Tarapida's tenure, in October 722, a Chinese delegation had come to the royal Court of Kashmir. China had defeated Tibet and had entered and established itscontrol over the Palur Minor (Gilgit) region. Through the aforesaid delegation, the Tang dynasty of China expressed its gratitude to the king of Kashmir (i.e. Tarapida) for providing food supplies and military assistance to the Chinese army, which had established its base in Gilgit.

Tansen Sen infers from this that there was some kind of a military cooperation pact between China and Kashmir.[12]

Tarapida didnot just provide food and other supplies to China, he also provided his military assistance because an important trade route passed through Gilgit, security of which was in Kashmir's interests as well. The credit for this mutual cooperation treaty with China must go to Chandrapida. His policy of helping China in the conflicts of the Gilgit region was carried forward by Tarapida. Accordingly, he continued the military and civil cooperation with that country. Therefore, we cannot rely on the information provided by Kalhana about Tarapida's general conduct and the oppression during his tenure.

Another important piece of information that we get from the Chinese sources is that during Tarapida's tenure, Kashmir had established itself as a major power. So much so, that the daughter of the Chinese emperor (who had married the king of Tibet) thought of seeking asylum in Kashmir. If he was indeed so evil, this wouldnot have been possible. This story goes like this –

After the incessant conflicts between China and Tibet, in the year 707 AD, the two countries signed a peace treaty. As a token of this treaty, in 710 AD, the Chinese princess Jincheng was married to the king of Tibet Tridé Tsuktsen,also known as Me Agtsom.Jincheng came to Tibet the same year. After she spent a few years with her husband, one day King Tegin Zibil of Zabulistan received an urgent message from her. Tegin sent a delegation to HiunTsang, the Chinese king. The delegation met the king in the month of October/November 724.

The delegation informed the Chinese king that his daughter wishes to leave Tibet (i.e. her husband) and seek asylum in Kashmir. According to the information provided by the delegates, it takes seven days to reach Kashmir from Tibet. Princess Jincheng has already sent two Chinese messengers to Kashmir secretly and has praised the friendly relations between Kashmir and China. 'I wish to leave Tibet and take asylum in Kashmir. Will you please accept me?' Being asked thus by her, the king of Kashmir (Tarapida) replied, 'O Princess, please feel free to come here. We shall lend you any help and cooperation.' While replying to her in

this way, the king of Kashmir has informed theking of Zabulistan, 'The Chinese princess wishes to leave Tibet and seeks asylum in my kingdom.However, she may be followed by the Tibetan army. In case, the Tibetan army chases her to stop her from crossing over, I do not have enough army.Therefore, the Zabulistan king may kindly help me militarily.'[13]

As per this information, Tarapida in Kalhana's description and Tarapida coming across through these political and diplomatic incidents obviously do not match. Perhaps, Tarapida, who was oppressive to his subjects, was sensible enough not to compromise the external relations of Kashmir.

Many scholars lent credence to Kalhana's information and had put forward a theory that the king, who offered help to the Chinese princess, could be, in fact, Chandrapida and not Tarapida. However, in this respect, the Chinese documents mention the Kashmiri king's name as 'Ti-an-mu'.Sen has clarified that this name is the Chinese version of Tarapida. He further says that because of Kashmir's help to the Chinese army in Gilgit (Bolur or Palur Minor), the Chinese princess felt assured that Kashmir will protect her from Tibet.This belief prompted her to seek asylum in Kashmir.[14]

Besides, in 724 AD, since Chandrapida wasnot even alive, this incident ought to have taken place during Tarapida's time. It is not surprising that Jincheng thought Kashmir to be the nearest and safest place. Of course, we do not know the exact reason behind the discord between the Chinese princess and her husband, the king of Tibet.It is not clear why she chose to seek asylum in Kashmir instead of going back to China, to her father. But the internal power struggle in China and the periodic political troubles in Tibet may have caused tremendous distress to the princess. The reason she chose Kashmir for asylum was that even in Tarapida's tenure, Kashmir was known to be strong.This is a proof of that perception.

Though Chinese princess Jincheng wanted to take asylum in Kashmir, Sen proposes that she may not have actually come to Kashmir. This is because no source gives any clear information in this regard. Kalhana is silent in this matter. In fact, he doesnot even mention this event. He even doesnot mention the visits of the Chinese delegation to the royal court of Kashmir. Sen says that perhaps Tarapida's death made Jincheng drop her plan to take asylum in Kashmir.

This guess is not entirely baseless. Though Tarapida was alive at least till October-November 724.By the time, the delegation of Zabulistan returned from its visit to China.The Kashmiri as well as Zabuli armies could be deployed on the Tibetan border, i.e. sometime between December 724 and early 725, when Tarapida had died.It is natural that consequently there was political instability, even if temporary, in Kashmir. Therefore, it is certain that Jincheng had to change her decision. In the end, she had to stay back in Tibet. Because of the internal political upheavals, even China doesnot appear to have helped her. Though

scholars such as Sen vehemently state that China was a superpower then, many events and happenings have proved contrary to this. In fact, Tibet was a bigger power at the time.We find that only Kashmir put up a strong resistance to Tibet. The point to be noted here is that even during Tarapida's tenure, Kashmir was strong enough to seek asylum in.

Secondly, Tarapida evinced the diplomatic acumen by asking help from Zabulistan because his own military power was not sufficient. He doesnot seem to have forgotten to use the diplomatic relations between Kabul-Zabul and Kashmir. Even in his tenure, the Arab threat wasnot over. In fact, the threat of Arab governor Junayd al-Murri attacking Kashmir was always there and equally, because of its help to the Chinese against Tibet, the latter could have attacked Kashmir as well. Along with this, since Kashmir had decided to give asylum to the Tibetan emperor's wife Jincheng, it was quite natural that it had invited the wrath of Tibet on a large scale. This means Kashmir would have had to deploy its army on at least two fronts simultaneously. Therefore, to fight the powerful army of Tibet, he displayed the diplomacy of seeking military assistance of friendly states.

Zabulistan decided to send its delegation to China to seek their permission to help Kashmir because the Chinese princess was involved. The Chinese king gave the said permission and even gifted silk cloth bundles to the delegation.[15] However, the Chinese emperor himself did not take any initiative to ensure safe passage of the princess.This brings home the fact that China wasnot as powerful at this point.

This incident raises several question markson Kalhana's information. If Tarapida was indeed so evil and subjective, one wouldnot expect this political acumen from Tarapida. Here, it is also proved that Kashmir was a leader in terms of providing military help and supplies to aweak China. If people had run away to villages in his tenure, Tarapida could not have helped the outside powers in this fashion.

Even assuming that he killed Chandrapida out of his political ambitions, he doesnot appear to have upstaged the former's political policies. According to Kalhana, the Brahmin officers unhappy with Tarapida killed him by black magic (or a plot to kill). Though black magic was a commonly used term at that time, it is a superstition and exaggeration. It is also obvious that Tarapida's tenure came to be short-lived because of his death. Though it is possible that some Brahmin officers plotted and killed Tarapida because he was an obstacle in their vested interests or because they carried a grudge against him as he had killed Chandrapida for power.Kalhana's own narration raised doubts in this respect. A question mark appears as to whether Tarapida was truly murdered or it was an event resulting from some illness or accident. In my opinion, it is not true that Trarapida's death was due to black magic or murder.There must be some other reason.

If we go by the dates in the Chinese records, Tarapida was in power at least till October/November 724. We have seen that around the same time the Zabulistani delegation had gone to China. It is possible that he died soon after that. Even if he was evil enough to kill his brother, he doesnot appear to have upstaged his brother's political policies. Of course, it is uncertain how true the story of brother killing brother given by Kalhana was. But Tarapida's tenure doesnot appear as bad as his name is maligned by the information given about Tarapida's death. We can say that barring a few disgruntled officers, the internal administration of Kashmir was good. If his performance was as bad as described by Kalhana, the Chinese delegation and the king of Zabulistan wouldnot have trustedKashmir as much as they did.

It appears that after Tarapida's assassination, Lalitaditya ascended the throne. This event, we can calculate approximately, happened sometime in the last month of 724 AD to first few months of 725 AD. Besides, the reader can imagine the political challenges faced by Muktapida as soon as he came to power. He was suddenly thrust into this situation.

This is the background of a great, spirited warrior who created a permanent place for himself as a great emperor in not just Kashmir but the entire Indian subcontinent by taking on the challenges and by turning his kingdom into an empire.

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Chapter 4

Lalitaditya's ascension to the throne and defeat of the Arabs

Muktapida was the youngest among three brothers. He had witnessed the just and heroic career of at least eight years of his eldest brother Chandrapida.He had witnessed the short tenure of Tarapida. Many significant political events had taken place during Tarapida's tenure. Kashmir had become strong enough for the queen of Tibet to seek asylum in it. He had seen the important role Kashmir had played in the Sino-Tibetan war in the north of Kashmir.He had also seen the consolidation of the political relations with the Shahi rulers in the west.

His teenage was spent in the peaceful and long tenure of his father. Kalhana does not give any information about the period preceding his ascension to the throne. However, he is unlikely to have expected the responsibility of the kingdom to come to him so early, given that he had two elder brothers. Being a prince, it is obvious that he would have received appropriate training. Then Kashmir was the knowledge centre of various faiths. Buddhist and Shaivite scholars used to visit Kashmir to gain more knowledge from the masters in Kashmir and for philosophical debates. Since he was the prince of a kingdom that was home to various religions,which coexisted in a friendly manner, it is obvious that he was trained in a way that would introduce him to the isms and would give him perfect knowledge of administration and warfare. During Chandrapida's tenure, he also got to see first-hand the change in the politics of foreign countries due to turbulence caused by the Arab invasions; Chandrapida's diplomacy in sending an envoy to the Chinese court and at the same time the way he preserved the just social principles internally. He also had to suffer the pain of sudden deaths of his two elder brothers. As a prince, it was inevitable for him to participate in the affairs of the royal court in some or the other capacity. Through it, he must have gained hands-on training of the actual administration of the kingdom, looking at the customs of the dynasties of those times.

He had to accept the throne of Kashmir after Tarapida's death. One has to say that all this was unexpected for him. Else, he would have acted as the associate of his ruler brother and that would have been his sole identity in the history. If Tarapida was indeed murdered, the responsibility of finding the guilty and punishing them would have fallen on Muktapida.However, since Kalhana does not indicate it in any way, we can say that Tarapida's murder was either a public belief or a rumour. It is possible that the sudden demise of Tarapida resulted in such rumours.

However, he didnot expect Tarapida's tenure to end so soon. Even if he did, it is not possible that he would expect to be made the king.Since we saw in the first

chapter, there were many influential factors that affected the appointment of a king in Kashmir. Yet, it is also not very apparent that he was enthroned immediately after Tarapida's death. It is quite natural that since the king himself had passed away suddenly, his supporters would have jumped into the political conflict. In the end, however,by overcoming the political tactics and counter tactics. Lalitaditya proved that in spite of possible opposition,he could be the deserving ruler.In the last month of 724 AD or the initial months of 725 AD, he assumed charge.

This was the beginning of a splendid period for Kashmir, which proved beneficial to the entire Indian subcontinent as well. When he came to power, Kashmir had to unexpectedly face dangers from three directions. If not handled successfully, they could have jeopardised Kashmir's very existence. However, Muktapida was a strong, skilled warrior and a diplomat, who not only overcame the threats, he crossed Kashmir's borders and built a powerful empire. An emperor's greatness is not determined by the number of wars he wins but by the amount of constructive work he does for the people. The massive work done by Lalitaditya.Its remnants can be seen even today. They tell us about his greatness.

After Muktapida ascended the throne, as per the custom of his dynasty, he took up an honorific 'Lalitaditya'. His ascension year is fixed by the scholars to be 724 AD based on other contemporary evidences (However, we have seen that it could very well be 725 AD. Without getting entangled into the chronology, let us move ahead by assuming that the year 724-725 ADis close to the reality). Kalhana's chronology is, at times, suspect.This year has been fixed by recalculating the time so as to get as close to the facts as possible by alleviating the resultant confusion.There appears to be no reason to reject it. However, since the year of Lalitaditya's ascension to throne as deduced by earlier historians assuming Kalhana to be correct is entirely wrong, many discrepancies and anachronisms arise while constructing Lalitaditya's history.For example, according to Shankar Pandit,the year of Lalitaditya ascension is 695 AD and not 724-725 AD while Steinclaims it to be 699 AD.

Let us first understand why this discrepancy arose.

Shankar Pandit, the editor of *Gaudavaho* had taken efforts to determine the exact period of Lalitaditya using *Rajatarangini* as the base. According to him, Lalitaditya came to power in 695 AD. He had arrived at this year on the basis of the tenure of each king as given by Kalhana and calculating the years as per the Roman calendar by linking the Laukika (Yudhishthir Shaka) Shaka with it.

While deciding the year of Lalitaditya's ascension to the throne and explaining his logic about it, he argued that Kalhana doesnot write about the Arab invasions during the tenure of Chandrapida. But we know that these invasions began in the year 711 AD.So, if Chandrapida had been in power in 711 AD, Kalhana would have surely mentioned the Arab invasions that took place in the

northeast and Sindh during 711 to 714. However, Kalhana doesnot mention them. On this basis, he has regarded the records of the Chinese royal court completely unreliable. Even though Kalhana has given only the tenure of the kings and that too, estimated in many cases, Shankar Pandit has taken them to be reliable.[1]

It is a fact that in his account of the kings from Chandrapida to Muktapida, Kalhana has not mentioned anywhere the Arab invasions. But then, he also does not mention the Chinese traveller Huen Tsang, who had visited Kashmir and stayed there for two years. Sahnkar Pandit, however, accepts that Huen Tsang had come to Kashmir. If one accepts this, one has to also accept that during the tenure of Durlabhvardhana (Pratapaditya II), the boundaries of Kashmir had extended to Rajauri, Poonch, Taxila, etc. But Kalhana has not mentioned anything about this mission to expand the kingdom. Perhaps, Shankar Pandit didnot realise what kind of confusion can arise if one relied on Kalhana entirely. Because of this confusion, not just about Lalitaditya, there was problem in constructing the history of his contemporary king Yashovarman of Kanauj as well. This fact needs to be understood here.

Moreover, in the documents of the Chinese court, however, there is a clear mention of Durlabhvardhana, Chandrapida and Tarapida.Their related dates have been recorded as per the Chinese calendar. According to them, it is clear that Chandrapida was the king at least till 720 AD. Muktapida came to power after Tarapida. That means the year 695 fixed by Shankar Pandit as the year of Muktapida Lalitaditya's ascension is wrong.It has to be 724 AD (or if we allow for a correction of a few months, 725 AD) as determined by other scholars.We have to say that that is correct. Shankar Pandit created this gap of 31 years. The same error has occurred in the case of Yashovarman, the friend-turned-foe of Lalitaditya. Some scholars have reconstructed his history based on Lalitaditya's year of ascension given by Shankar Pandit.However, since that didnot match with other contemporary events, there was a lot of confusion in the history for some time.

Therefore, the constant resistance offered by Kashmir to the Arabs and the victories of Chandrapida and Lalitaditya over them have not been duly creditedto them. This is the reason the history of not just Lalitaditya but that of the Karkotaka dynasty as well needs to be reconstructed taking into consideration other contemporary evidence as one cannot rely entirely on Kalhana.

Kalhana presents to us a broad outline of the tenures of each king, which is full of poetic, ethical and exciting stories. While its utility cannot be denied, we cannot take it to be entirely normative. Besides, because of its ornate language and exaggeration, efforts are neededto draw realistic inferences from it.

Readers may please note that here onward, we will be reviewing Muktapida Lalitaditya's life and work with the base year 724/725 AD, which was the year of

his ascension to the throne as it has been proven by other available evidence.It has also been accepted by a majority of scholars.

We have seen that though Mohammad bin Qasim did not invade the Kashmiri mainland, Chandrapida had to act because Qasim had reached the boundaries of Kashmir, which had extended up to Punjab. Also, since the invasion had affected the Kabul-Zabul and Tokharistan regions that were friendly with Kashmir, it was inevitable that the Arab menace would affect Kashmir one day. Moreover, Mohammad Qasim being personally involved in the attempt on Kashmir, Chandrapida had to put up a resistance to him. Having seen that period of savage raids first hand, Lalitaditya was bound to keep a tab on the movements of the Arabs since the beginning.

When Lalitaditya came to power, there were three major powers in the region south of the Hindukush range, surrounded by the mountains. One was Kapisha (Kabul), the second was Zabulistanand the third was Kashmir. The first two kingdoms were under the Turkish influence but carried a large shadow of the Hindu and Buddhist cultures. In a way, Kabul and Zabul were mixed civilizations. Among the three powers, Kashmir was the strongest. All the three powers had established strong political relationships with China. As a result, delegations from these kingdoms and China visiting each other was a regular affair.

Around this time, Tibet was coming up as an aggressive and powerful state. The short-lived amicable relations between China and Tibet had deteriorated again because the Chinese princess married to the Tibetan king had decided to take asylum in Kashmir.The threat of Tibet turning its evil eye towards Kashmir was looming large.

The danger had been looming since Chandrapida’s tenure itself. He had fended it off by extending military help and civil cooperation to China so as to prevent the Tibetan forces engaged in the Sino-Tibetan conflict from taking over Gilgit and coming down to Kashmir. However, Chandrapida’s plan of securing China’s help in the war with the Arabs in lieu of his military help to China in the Pamir ranges didnot materialise because the Chinese forces remained occupied in the Pamir range. Chandrapida was thus forced to fight the Arabs alone.

During Durlabhvardhana’s times, Kashmir had brought the China-Kabul route under its control but the current Arab crisis had weakened it. This had affected China as well. Though Mohammad Qasim was killed or had committed suicide on his return to Arabistan, the Arab governors were still ruling Sindh. After Mohammad Qasim was recalled in 715 AD, within a few years,Omar (II) had become the Caliph. His tenure (717-720 AD) is considered to be relatively peaceful.During this time, the local rulers had settled in, in Sindh and the surrounding parts.

Caliph Omar had decreed that the Hindu/Buddhist Shahis and the other northwestern rulers should adopt Islam and accept his sovereign power. Accordingly, to avoid confrontation with the Arabs, many of the rulers chose to convert to Islam and retain their kingdoms. They also adopted Arab names. Thereafter, Omar did not pursue the expansion of the Islamic rule. However, after Omar, Yazidi (II) became the Caliph. He had a short reign, from 720 to 724 AD.But he renewed the expansion policy. That had the seeds of the future troubles.

Dahar's son Jaysimha had converted to Islam.He was looking after Sindh as a vassal of the Arabs under a new name Hulli Shah. Likewise, the original rulers of Gandhar, Multan and Pakhtunistan had regained their kingdoms, of course, by accepting the condition of conversion.

Because the trade route was now under the control of the Arabs, it was essential to oust them and regain that control on the China-India trade route. The Arab rule was already established in Balkh. Qasim's invasion had left the geopolitical situation in this hilly region in disarray. Without stabilising it, commerce could not be stable.

In those days,he who controlled the trade route, controlled the regions it passed through.

Dahar's son Jaysimhaaka Hulli Shahhad also agreed to be the vassal king of the Caliph.

In 724/725,Caliph Hisham al-Malik had already usurped the Arab kingdom. He had appointed Junayd al-Murri as the governor of Sindh. Junayd al-Murri was even more aggressive. As soon as he came to Sindh, the first thing he did was to go against the new king of Sindh Hulli Shah, which culminated into a war between the two. In this marine war, Junayd al-Murri defeated Hulli Shah and sank the latter's ships. He captured Shah alive and killed him.

When Lalitaditya learned about this, he became anxious that Junayd al-Murri may resume the old aggressive policy and create anarchy all around. He then began appealing to the vassal states of the Arabs in Sindh and northern India, asking them to stop paying obeisance money to the Arabs. The available historical records show that because of this, many regions, including Punjab, stopped paying the Arabs. It is quite natural that these local rulers too saw Junayd al-Murri as a threat to their existence.They may have responded to Lalitaditya's appeal out of their contempt towards Junayd al-Murri.

Junayd al-Murriwent to war against and killedHulli Shah even after the latter had accepted the Caliph's sovereignty and paid him the obeisance money regularly.This had naturally unsettled the other rulers. The available evidence, howsoever sketchy it is, shows that they were reinvigorated by Lalitaditya's adoption of a stern policy.

Hulli Shah having taken refuge in Kashmir earlier, naturally had close relations with Lalitaditya. In fact, it was Kashmir that had saved him from the onslaught of Qasim. When Hulli Shah was killed, Lalitaditya was incensed.He launched an offensive against the Arabs. The Kashmir that could avoid Tibet by helping the Chinese militarily, couldnot have kept quiet against the Arabs. On the other hand, the Arabs couldnot have been particularly accommodative of Kashmir because it had given shelter to Jaysimha aka Hulli Shah.

For this reason, reignition of the Kashmir-Arab conflict was inevitable. Junayd al-Murri started with threatening Lalitaditya. He also sent the Caliph's decree to embrace Islam to Kashmir. However, Lalitaditya was not the one to be scared so easily. On the contrary, he went on the offensive. Emulating his eldest brother Chandrapida, Lalitaditya left Kashmir with his army and attacked Junayd al-Murri. He caught up with Junayd al-Murri by crossing the Punjab border and defeated his strong army with deft manoeuvres of his cavalry.

Not used to suffering a defeat, the Arabs were jolted by this reverse. On Lalitaditya's part, this was his first victory after assuming the throne. Lalitaditya warned Junayd al-Murri not to demand obeisance money from any local ruler and returned to his capital.[2]

Unfortunately, a detailed account of this war is not available. There is practically no Indian record in this respect and the very few that are available are exaggerated. Even the Arab sources only mention the missions and not the end result,where the Arabs had suffered a defeat. Therefore, the Arab sources merely record that Junayd al-Murri attacked Kashmir and remain silent about the outcome of this attack, which is an indirect admission that the Arabs were defeated. Besides, if we look at the later history, we know exactly how to fill in the blanks to complete it.It is obvious that this war with the Arabs had been bloody. The fact that Junayd al-Murri never dared attack Kashmir again proves that the victory of Lalitaditya over Junayd al-Murri was a historic event. This victory of Lalitaditya checked the Arabexpansionism.

As Lalitaditya had just assumed the reins after Tarapida, he needed to set up the governance system of his kingdom again to put in place an efficient administration. Challenges were coming up from Tibet and the Gilgit-Baltistan region as well. So, he couldnot remain out of Kashmir for long. That is the reason he couldnot uproot the Arabs right then. We can say that due to this, he had to return to Kashmir after the temporary victory and after ensuring that the Arabs would not turn towards Kashmir again.

Nevertheless, the Arabs werenot going to keep quiet even after their defeat.So, as soon as Lalitaditya returned to Kashmir, Junayd al-Murri became active again. According to Al Baladhuri, Junayd al-Murri attacked the first state to revolt against him at the instance of Lalitaditya, Kiraj (Kangda), and defeated it.

He probably hoped that by hearing this, other rulers who had stopped paying him obeisance money would start paying it again. After finishing his job there quickly,Junayd al-Murri turned his attention to the south.He troubledKachcha and Rajasthan,took over Jodhpur as well as Jaisalmer. Then he moved further south, to Gujarat. There he took over Bharuch. However, later, the Lat king Pulkeshi defeated him,so did the Gurjar Pratiharas. Frustrated and angered by these defeats, Junayd al-Murri destroyed the Vallabhi town and the port in Saurashtra on his way back.[3]

Of course, there was no point in hoping that the defeats would dishearten Junayd al-Murri. He abandoned his southern sojourn and promptly turned towards the north again. Lalitaditya was busy tidying up his administration and also securing the borders with Tibet and Tokharistan.

The Arabs received their first defeat at the hands of Lalitaditya. Till then, they had been winning everywhere: in Sindh, in Multan, Balochistan and Gandhar. It is no surprise that the defeat by Lalitaditya turned out to be a curse for Junayd al-Murri.Later,he hardly received any success anywhere else. He had to accept at least three defeats. Even though Lalitaditya and some other rulers defeated the Arabs, the latter had not been uprooted completely. After turning towards the north, Junayd al-Murri's marauders reached Ujjain, where they again faced defeat. However, they had done the damage. The central India was ruled by the mighty Yashovarman of Kanauj. He was, in fact, a conqueror but the Arab trouble forced him to deal with them. He realised that this job couldnot be done alone. History is sketchy in its information about this part. However, one thing is clear:It is quite probable and logical that Lalitaditya and Yashovarman joined handsto destroy the Arabs completely. This joint mission was launched by them further against Tibet as well.

There is no doubt that because of the defeats and failures of Junayd al-Murri, the Arab rule in Sindh had become shaky. When Lalitaditya and Yashovarman effected simultaneous attacks by opening two fronts in the northwestern parts of India that were occupied by the Arabs, it was obvious that the Arabs would be unsettled. The Caliph blamed Junayd al-Murri for the failures in India on all fronts and recalled him from Sindh. Junayd al-Murri was then replaced by Tamim al-Utbi as the governor.

The unrest and chaos caused during Junayd al-Murri's tenure in North India affected the business and commerce as well. It also inevitably affected the trade and commerce of the Arabs themselves. When Junayd al-Murri went back, the Arab centres in Sindh started decaying. A vacuum was created there. Trade through the ports slowed down. Though the Debal port was still controlled by the Arabs, the slack in business brought about economic pressure on them. Their nominal rule existed in some other parts as well but they couldnot get the

obeisance money from them without going to war, which made their position weaker.

When Junayd al-Murri was appointed in Sindh, Lalitaditya had instigated the rulers of Sindh, Multan and Balochistan to revolt and to stop paying the Arabs. When he himself defeated Junayd al-Murri, almost every ruler had stopped paying the Arabs any money. Naturally, it meant an economic crisis for the Arabs.They began plundering the other regions. This nuisance had to be stopped. Moreover, Tamim was weaker than Junayd al-Murri.So, the situation had to be exploited to attack the Arabs again.Also,the local rulers had to be instigatedto revolt against them so that the nuisance could be ended once and for all. Lalitaditya seems to have started taking steps in this direction. Yashovarman too had perhaps joined hands with Lalitaditya earlierto avoid undertaking an independent operation. Because of their joint operation and the local rebellions, the Arabs had to step back at all places. So much so, that in the end, their rule remained confined to the Debal port alone. The Arab sources write very little about this series of reverses. They are silent about it obviously because the losers donot want to write about their consistent defeats.

Al Baladhuri does write about Junayd al-Murri's campaigns but refrains from informing us about his defeats. Rather, he appears to be inclined to hide this information. The information about the victories achieved by the various Indian rulers over Junayd al-Murri is found in their respective inscriptions but the Arab sources are mum on them. On the reasons behind the Arabs' retreat from Sindh, both the Indian and the Arab sources are equally silent. No inscriptions of Lalitaditya and Yashovarman being found as yet, the details of the Lalitaditya-Yashovarman joint venture against the Arabs have not come to light.However, we can imagine how Lalitaditya, possibly in coordination with Yashovarman, uprooted the Arabs from the northwestern parts of India, which were the major centres of the Arabs.

The resistance the Arabs had to contend with this time was so stiff, it was virtually a revolt. The coordinated efforts of Lalitaditya, Yashovarman and the local rulers inflicted so heavy damage on the Arabs that with the sole exception of the Debal port, they had to vacate all their posts everywhere and go back. Amongthe Arabs that fled was governor Tamim. He died on his way back in the year 731 AD.[4]

The defeated Arab soldiers, who went back to their country, were so shaken that they refused to go to India again ever. Though the Arab sources do not throw light on the reasons behind this phenomenon, it is obvious that the complete rout had instilled a fear in the minds of these soldiers. To defeat the Arabs so badly, the local rulers needed to have the support of a very strong army and leadership.Lalitaditya fulfilled that need.

When Tamim died during his retreat, a new governor, Al Haqam, was appointed in 731 AD. However, he was not able to re-establish the Arab rule. The Arab historians are silent even about Haqam's performance. Other historians agree that this must be because he couldnot succeed in any of his endeavours.

The extent of Yashovarman's direct contribution in this war is not clear.We can logically deduce that his army had joined that of Lalitaditya. Lalitaditya was the architect of this revolt.Hehad started it by appealing to the local rulers not to pay obeisance money to the Arabs. After that, he must have immediately undertaken the western expedition or he may have carried out the initiative against Kabulistan, Zabulistan and Tokharistan as he was chasing Tamim.

This is mainly because though Kabul and Zabul were friendly states to Kashmir, they had weakened to some extent because of their fights with the Arabs. On the other hand, Tokharistan was completelyunder the control of the Arabs. As the trade routes via Gilgit split into different directions from Tokharistan itself, to reduce the Arab ascendancy on these routes was essential. Kalhana has mentioned Lalitaditya's victory over Tokharistan, but he has changed the chronology of events. According to his sequence, Yashovarman's defeat came first followed by that of the Darads and finally Tokharistan. Though this is erroneous, we can say with certainty that Lalitaditya's victory over Tokharistanis an extremely significant historical event.It took place soon after the victory against the Arabs.

In the same year as his coronation or maybe a little prior to that, in 723-724 AD, a Korean bhikkhu, Hyecho, had visited Kashmir. We will review the information he has provided about the regions surrounding Kashmir.There is a close link between the situation and the movements of Lalitaditya later on. Around 730-731 AD, the Arabs ran away.Soon, in 732-733 AD, Lalitaditya freed the five trade routes passing through Gilgit and the nearby areas from Tibet and the Arabs. In 733 AD, Lalitaditya had sent his delegation to the Chinese Court. From this historical event, we will review the Tokharistan campaign in the next chapter.

However, some things need to be clarified here.

The later rift between Yashovarman and Lalitaditya is said to be the fallout of a dispute over the boundary. Even though that is mostly true, the opinion of some scholars that it happened soon after the defeat of the Arabs i.e. in 730-31 AD, cannot be accepted. Since Lalitaditya had led the war and his forces had proven effective in it, he may have extended his boundaries proportionately and given some areas to Yashovarman. That was not wrong. If at all, there was a dispute in this matter and probably that was the sole reason of the dispute between them, the event took place much later. Moreover, in 731 AD, Yashovarman had sent his minister to the Chinese Court. However, there is no indication of any conflict between Lalitaditya and Yashovarman in the related records.

Lalitaditya was able to defeat the Arabs because his army was mostly made up by cavalry and the foot soldiers. In comparison, the Indian kings relied more on elephants in plains. The Arabs used camels and horses. Elephants restricted the speed of the Indian kings, whichbenefitted the fast moving Arabs. This was one important reason of whatever successes they had in the Indian subcontinent. This was exactly the advantage Lalitaditya had because with his cavalry, he could make swift moves.

Information that we get from other available sourcesis sketchy.However, the logical interpretation of other contemporary events clearly show that Lalitaditya's victory over the Arabs was a historical event. But just because Kalhana does not mention this event, scholars such as Shankar Pandit refuse to accept that the Arab (Mlechchas) problem arose during Chandrapida's or Lalitaditya's time.

In his preface of *Gaudavaho*, he says that if Kalhana records the nuisance created by small and big tribes, both domestic and the external, why does he leave out the biggest of them, the Arabs? Also, according to him, if Chandrapida was a supporter of the Brahminical religion, why would he ask for help against the Arabs from the Buddhist king of China?

One can only term this as illogical. It is wrong to impose the present social reality on old times, without taking into consideration the religious tolerance of that time. To negate the Arab problem during Lalitaditya's time, he puts forward a strange logic that Lalitaditya did not mentioned the Arab invasions in his letter to the Chinese king.Therefore, it is not possible that there were Arab invasions during Lalitaditya's tenure.[5]

We need to note here that the argument made by Shankar Pandit is to prove that Lalitaditya's ascension to the throne took place in 695 AD and not in 724/725 AD. For argument's sake, even if we accept his contention that the ascension took place in 695 AD, the first invasion of Mohammad Qasim in 711 AD is a historical fact. Kalhana himself has given Lalitaditya's tenure to be 36 years. So going by Pandit's opinion Qasim's invasion happened 16 years after Lalitaditya came to power. We have already seen that Qasim had threatened Kashmir and Chandrapida held him near Jalandhar in Punjab, from the Arab sources and other evidences. Going by Shankar Pandit's chronology, it should be Lalitaditya and not Chandrapida who stopped the Arabs. Yet, while describing the tenures of both these kings, Kalhana doesnot mention the Arab invasions at all. What does this possibly mean?

It only means that either Kalhana didnot get information about it or whatever little he did get was mythical.He didnot understand its significance. Perhaps for the same reason, Kalhana also does not mention the exact reason behind the war between Lalitaditya and Yashovarman. When Lalitaditya left for conquests, he

merely mentions it broadly as, 'After Antarveda, he won Gadhipur (Kanauj).' (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4, 128-33)

Without the consideration of the fact that Kalhana's history is full of myths and legends and that he has left many gaps, Pandit relied only on Kalhana and has tried to prove other tools unreliable.

However, since his commentary influenced the latter-day historians as well, there is confusion about even the year of ascension of Lalitaditya. It may be noted here that even going by his year of ascension of Lalitaditya, the Arab issue doesnot get addressed satisfactorily. As said earlier, without relying fully on Kalhana, one needs to take a lot of effort to uncover history from the information provided by him. It also becomes necessary to join the dots in light of other evidence.

The Indian historians, it appears, havenot accorded as much importance to the exact religious, political and social impact on the other parts as they have given to Mohammad Qasim's invasion of Sindh and his killing of King Dahar. Another fact is that it is a tough task to create a coherent picture from the sketchy information we get in this history. History is silent about the developments in Afghanistan (Kabul-Zabul Valley and Sistan Province) to a large extent.Where it does speak about it, it is discrepant.

As per the information given by J Harmatta, even though the kingdoms of Kabulistan and Zabulistan were independent, their rulers were relatives of each other. For example, when Lalitaditya came to power and his conflicts with the Arabs began, the ruler of Kapisha (Kabul) was a close relative of the ruler of Zabulistan. Since the two ruling families often engaged into intermarriages, they were united.That is the reason they could hold themselves up strongly against the Arabs.[6]

It may not be surprising if even Kashmir and these two powers intermarried as well. However, in naming the wives of the kings of Karkotaka dynasty, Kalhana has sanskritised their names. Hence, it is difficult to trace their origins from their names. We can only imagine that considering the close ties of Kashmir with these rulers, such marriages must have taken place.

The Afghan sources of history of this period are either destroyed now or no history was written there at all. Even then, since Gandhar, Swat Valley, Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab were geographically connected with Kashmir, it would be illogical to say that Qasim's invasions didnot affect Kashmir or there were no wars between the Arabs and the contemporary Kashmiri ruler. The history says otherwise.

Moreover, Kashmir's boundaries were up to Poonch, Rajauri and Taxila (i.e. Gandhar), an expansion that was done in Durlabhvardhana's tenure itself. Therefore, just because Kalhana didnot write about it, it would be illogical to say that it didnot happen. Besides, there is historical record that Chandrapida had

requested military assistance to the Chinese king against the Arabs. And yet, Kalhana hasnot mentioned the Arabs. The fact is that Lalitaditya's tenure began with conflicts with the Arabs, in which he emergedvictorious. Also, there is conclusive evidence that Lalitaditya defeated Arab governor Junayd al-Murri. Even *Chach Nama*refers to the strength of the Kashmiri king saying: 'Turan and Makaran also bow to the king of Kashmir'.

This great victory of Lalitaditya proved impactful because thereafter the Arabs couldnot establish themselves firmly in this land. Tamim, the governor that followed Junayd al-Murri had to run away because of the defeat in the war. Governor Al Haqam, who was appointed in 731, also had to face a series of reversals.[7]However, he too didnot dare eye Kashmir. Rather, Kashmir became unassailable for the Arabs. The Arab rule shrank to remain confined to the Sindh region to some extent. That is all!

Lalitaditya appears to be engaged in conflicts with the Arabs till he chased off governor Tamim right up to Zabul;till he won Tokharistanin 733 AD. In the meantime (725 to 730 AD), he also kept an eye on the Tibet border and crushed the rebellion of the Darads (people of Gilgit) and revolts in the tribal kingdoms of the Chitral range. In this, he didnot request military assistance from China, like Chandrapida had done. Perhaps, he knew that China wasnot in a position to provide it. He had thought it convenient to establish military cooperation with the nearest power Kanauj rather than seeking it from a weakened distant power. Besides, he wasnot fighting on a single front. He appears to have kept his eye on those fronts as well.When he got an opportunity, hegrabbed them. The victory over the Arabs and to subdue them is the most important achievement of Lalitaditya.Historians ought to take cognisance of this. This event struck at the belief that the Kashmiri people are nervous and coward.It is a fact that the other kingdoms couldnot survive against the barbaric storm of the Arabs. Though it is true that the Arabs didnot win everywhere, they contributed in breaking the backbone of the local rulers and to the political upheavals. That was not the case with Kashmir and Madhya Desha.

Rather, one has to say that Lalitaditya, like his brother Chandrapida, combined diplomacy and war skills well to rejuvenate the Kashmiri military. We have to say that this was the great beginning of an equally great career.

Speaking about Lalitaditya's career, we have to think carefully about the exact chronology of the important events of his life and analyse it. If we go by Kalhana's information, we have to say that he first took over Antarveda and the next important conflict was with the contemporary powerful king Yashovarman. However, the fact that Kalhana doesnot even mention the conflicts with the Arabs proves that his chronology isnot correct.Even in the case of the events that he has

mentioned, he has created confusion by altering the sequence of those events.Some of the events he mentions are highly unlikely.

Therefore, we will review Lalitaditya's further movements with the help of Kalhana but without relying on him entirely and in the light of other evidence.

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Chapter 5

Lalitaditya's s northwestern victories

We saw in the previous chapter that Lalitaditya came to power somewhere between end of 724 AD and the beginning of 725 AD. Korean bhikkhu Hyecho's visit to India and Kashmir in 723-724AD has also been mentioned earlier. Hyecho is also known by the Indian name 'Pradnyavikram'. He left for India on the advice of his teacher in China to obtain more knowledge of Buddhism. He came to Kashmir via Magadh, Varanasi and Kushinagar. Going back, he took the Silk Route. Therefore, he has provided the contemporary information about Tokharistan as well.

According to his notes, Bolur Major (Batista), Bolur Minor (Gilgit) and Shang hung (a small neighbourhood kingdom situated in Kasha, perhaps 'Jieshi') northwest of Kashmir were controlled by Tibet. Even though there are Buddha Viharas in this region, the attire, social customs and language of these people (Buddhists) are different. In all of these three kingdoms, Hu people (an Iranian tribe) are found in large numbers.[1]

During this period, Bolur Minor (Gilgit) was ruled by the Buddhist Patola Shahi dynasty.[2]It was the only route available for Tibet to make inroads into Central Asia. Hence, to gain control over it, Tibet constantly engaged in creating nuisance here. Besides, since the routes joining China and India passed through Tibet, the restrictions it put on them was a big hindrance.

If we go by this information, it proves that during Tarapida's tenure China and Kashmir had fought together with Tibet.They had forced it to retreat from Gilgit. Shortly afterwards, Tibet had recaptured that area. Control over the trade route wasnot the only objective behind it. China and Tibet were vying for the position of the strongest power in Central Asia. Though Tibet prevailed in the end, the tussle between the two countries continued for a long time. At this time, Tibet was obsessed with military ambitions. It also had an eye on Nepal and its immediate southern neighbour Magadh as well as Madhya Desha.

During this time, it is possible that Buddhism was on the wane in Tibet because Hyecho says in his travelogue that there is no Buddha Vihara in Tibet. Though he didnot visit Tibet, Ladakh, theimmediate neighbour of Kashmir, was ruled by Tibet,even for the namesake. Probably, Ladakh didnot have the Buddha Viharas or maybe they were neglected by the Tibetan ruler. It is clear, however, that during this period, Tibet had become extremely expansionist and had begun to challenge China as well as other powers. Heun Tsang of the Tang dynasty was the emperor of China during this period (712 AD to 756 AD).

Because of Tibet's expansionism, Kashmir's interests were greatly threatened. On the other side, the Arabs having established their sway over Balkh (Tokharistan) and since the trade routes bifurcated from there, they were ruling the routes from that side as well. This was a double threat. Moreover, China was riled by its internal economic troubles and political rebellion. As a result, there was no strong power to check the aggressive policy of Tibet.

Much later, in 737 AD, when the Chinese emperor Heun Tsang entrusted the job to Li Linfu, that country embarked on an offensive in respect of the internal rebels and the external enemies. That means China was not in a position to look at the external world before that.[3]Even then, Tansen Sen denies the contemporary importance of not just Kashmir but also Zabulistan and tries to show that China was powerful, which was not true.[A]

However, to protect its interests, China had kept its ambassadors in the courts of the neighbouring countries. Just as many delegations came to visit the Chinese Court, the Chinese delegations too visited the Kashmiri Court and the courts of other kingdoms regularly. There were military actions to the extent necessary as well, but there was no plan to establish a permanent military base in any of the troubled areas. In 733 AD. Lalitaditya offered help regarding a permanent base so as to keep Gilgit under a permanent check and to deter Tibet forever but it was not accepted for this same reason.

Of course, we do not find mention of such ambassadors or mutual delegations in the Indian literature (including Kalhana).In comparison, the Chinese had the sense to maintain such records (evenif there was certain exaggeration in them). We learn about the visit of a Chinese delegation to the Court of Chandrapida only through the Chinese sources.

In 731 AD, King Yashovarman of Kanauj sent his minister Sengpo Ta (perhaps the Chinese avatar of the Indian name Simhagupta. Yashovarman has been named 'Ichafomo' in the Chinese records) to the Chinese Court. Although it doesnot become clear whether this ambassador of Kanauj visited China to seek their help in repelling the Tibetan invasion that had reached up to Madhya Desha, considering the possibility of Tibet attacking Madhya Desha, it appears to be his motive.

While Tibet and China were engaged in fighting with each other, not only the routes connecting to India through Tibet were endangered, Tibet was actually raiding Bengal and Bihar. Since this threat for India had developed earlier as well, King Rajasinha in the south had sent a delegate to the Chinese Court.Records show that through the delegation, he had informed China about the possibility of Tibetan menace endangering his kingdom.[4]Even in the seventh century, Tibet had invaded Madhya Desha and Bihar but that time it was instigated by the Chinese ambassador. In short, unless Tibet was deterred permanently, establishing control

over Gilgit-Baltistan and the trade routes coming to India through Ladakh was not possible.

In other words, though Tibet never attacked Kashmir, Central India was in danger of not just Tibetan offensive but having blocked the routes to China as well. Perhaps the danger of Tibet at his doorsteps was the reason behind Yashovarman being compelled to send his ambassador to the Chinese Court soon after the war with the Arabs was over.

But the thing that gets proved here is that Yashovarman was still an independent king.He had not become a vassal of Lalitaditya. Therefore, at least till 731 AD, there is no possibility of any political conflict having arisen between Yashovarman and Lalitaditya.[5]

Yashovarman sought help from the Tang court of China. However, history clearly shows that the Tang court did not extend it because the Chinese emperor himself was embroiled in the domestic problems.

This also means that Lalitaditya, who led the war against the Arabs, was not available in Kashmir in 731 AD. Else, he would have helped Yashovarman. But when they both realised that China is not in a position to offer military help, they may have decided to arrest the Tibetan expansionism on their own from two different directions. However, Lalitaditya was himself on an entirely independent mission in 731. If we put together the retreat of Arab governor Tamim and Yashovarman sending his ambassador to the Chinese Court in 731, it becomes clear that Lalitaditya didnot stop at merely defeating the Arabs, he chased them and entered Afghanistan. Since he and his forces were unavailable to fight against the Tibetan incursion, Yashovarman sent his envoy to the Chinese Court because China was the only friendly country, which had a political conflict with Tibet.

But China didnot help him as well. In the end, when Lalitaditya returned after conquering Tokharistan and Dardistan, he attacked Tibet viaGilgit and helped Yashovarman as it seems. Yashovarman from the south and Lalitaditya from the north attacked and defeated Tibet simultaneously and freed all the five trade routes. If we look at the records about the delegation sent by Lalitaditya to the Chinese Court in 733 AD, this opinion gets closer to the reality.

In 733 AD, two years after Yashovarman had sent his envoy to the Chinese Court, Lalitaditya also sent his envoy. This was March/April 733.As per the then custom, Lalitaditya writes a letter in exaggerated respect:

“I have three types of forces: the Elephant unit, the cavalry and the foot soldiers. The Tibetans had troubled our friend and the king of Madhya Desha by blocking the five trade routes, making the use of the routes difficult. For this reason, we had to go to war with Tibet to free the trade routes. Now, if the Chinese army wishes to come to the Palur Minor (Gilgit), even if its strength is two lakh, I

have the capacity to feed it. There is a Naga lake called Mahapadmanand Lake (now called the Wular Lake) in my kingdom. I am ready to allow the Chinese army to camp on its banks."[6]

In reality, even though Muktapida had extended his helping hand considering China's interests as well, China did not act quickly on it. We need to understand here that China entered Gilgit region against Tibet after 737 AD. China became aggressive afterthe Tang emperor gave all the authority to Li Linfu. But Li Linfu appointed Korean commanders in his army instead of the Chinese people, which backfired. In China,the internalunrest grew even more. During this time, the job of keeping Tibetan expansionism in check was left to Lalitaditya alone.

To circumvent the issues cropping up due to military supremacy, Tibet decided to improve its emotional relationship with Gilgit and gave its princess Khri-Ma-Lod in marriage to Sushilizi, a pro-Tibet leader in Gilgit. This means, at least till 737 AD, Tibet's ascendancy over Gilgit had been greatly weakened.To regain it, Tibet had tried this approach as well.[7]However, it doesnot appear to have helped Tibet regain its control. China was anyway yet to recover from its internal problems. Even the political delegations that came to its court as a matter of protocol were sent back empty handed and with nominal certificates and declarations.

What we need to note here is that though the envoys of Kashmir and Kanauj had visited the Chinese Court, China doesnot appear to have helped them. Lalitaditya's envoy visited the Chinese Court in 733 AD, only after freeing the routes to China passing through Madhya Desha (including Bihar and Bengal) and those passing through Gilgit on his own, from the clutches of Tibet. The successes against Tibet achieved by Lalitaditya and Yashovarman had been joint but in independent operations from two different sides. On the contrary, Lalitaditya himself is seen to be offering his land near Gilgit to the Chinese army to set up its base in future. This also means that China never kept its army in Gilgit permanently. Then the question arises, how did Lalitaditya and Yashovarman complete the task of freeing these routes?

Lalitaditya was spirited, was constantly in war mode and he had consistently undertaken expeditions outside of his kingdom. So much so that his death also didnot occur in his homeland.The end came during his military expedition in a foreign land. This story given by Kalhana (again, minus its mythical part), is true. Kalhana saysLalitaditya spent most of his life outside his kingdom in wars, is a fact. Just that it is not supported by the science of historiography. For example, though Kalhana does not mention the above political events, he does mention the victories over Tibet and Tokharistan. That is his style. Even though the chronological sequence has been changed and the victories have been described in

ornate language, we can see in the light of other evidence that these two events were real.

Nevertheless, Tansen Sen draws a different conclusion from the sending of the delegation. He has inferred that since the Chinese king bestowed the honorific 'King' on Lalitaditya and called him 'Vassal', Lalitaditya was indeed a vassal king of China. The original Chinese word has been translated in English as 'vassal'.Sen, by taking the literal meaning of that word, has in a way cast a doubt on Lalitaditya's achievements. He has failed to take the facts into consideration.

This opinion of Sen has also influenced other historians.They too have assumed Lalitaditya to be the vassal king of the Tang emperor, without trying to understand what the Chinese Court meant by 'vassal'. However, the translation 'vassal' is basically erroneous.The original Chinese word needed to have been interpreted as 'friendly state', which they did not do. Vassal kings are only those who have been defeated in a war.Forget China, even Tibet has not been able to win Kashmir. Sen appears to have forgotten this fact. Without taking into consideration the practical factthat no state becomes a vassal state of another unless the latter achieves victory over the former, he has committed a grave error by lending importance to what is written in the lofty writing style of the Chinese Court.

The Tang court had even acknowledged Chandrapida as a king.It only means that the Court acknowledged him as a 'friend', that is all. To preserve the contact with Central Asia, they had to maintain civil and military contacts with Kashmir. We need to understand that China had maintained similar political relations with Kabul, Zabul, Tokharistan and the kings from Central India as well. That was the need for China because just as China was threatened by the aggressive policy of Tibet, the same danger existed for Central India and Kashmir as well. Therefore, to protect their political interests and their lands as well as the trade routes, these powers had to maintain good relations with each other.

According to the information provided by Korean traveller Hyecho, in 725 AD, Tibet controlled three regions, including Gilgit. In the previous year, China had thanked the then king Tarapida by sending its delegation, for the military and civil help given to them by Kashmir. This only means that this victory of the Chinese had been possible only because of Kashmir's help.Therefore, the Chinese king had thanked by sending his special delegation. It is clear, however, that thereafter China again lost its control on that region because Tibet had once again driven the Chinese out of Gilgit and established its own control. This conflict between the two neighbours was perpetual.

The most important thing is that by 733 AD, Lalitadityahad freed the northern routes from the Tibetan control. Yashovarman freed the routes to Tibet from Nepal to Bengal. Lalitaditya's delegation visited China only after both these powers achieved these tasks on their own. The help needed from China at this time

was to keep Tibet quiet permanently, not for war or to defend against an offensive on them. Itis extraordinary that in spite of all this, Tansen Sen regards China as the contemporary superpower.He tries to show Madhya Desha, Kashmir and Kabul-Zabul as weaker states.

In reality, it is Lalitaditya who offers China a place near the Mahapadma Lake (Wular Lake) for its military base and also guarantees them the supplies. He is well aware that without a permanent base in the region, Tibet cannot be kept under check. It is unlikely that Lalitaditya didnot know that he would incur permanent enmity with the mighty Tibet by offering China a place to establish its base because that would be tantamount to challenging Tibet. If he wanted to, Lalitaditya could very well have entered into a friendly pact with Tibet instead of China. He must surely be aware that a few victorious wars wouldnot end Tibet's expansionist attitude and he certainly had the foresight to understand that the job of arresting this expansionism had to be done jointly. That foresight wasnot evinced by China.

Purely from a commercial point of view, China, and not Tibet, was important for Central Asia and India as well. Therefore, it was important to control the routes connecting China and the regions around them. China being weak, this responsibility fell on Lalitaditya.Yet, Sen should ignore Lalitaditya's foresight is incomprehensible.

The fact is that even with Lalitaditya willing to co-operate, China refrained from putting Tibet on the backfoot permanently. It appears that the Tang king Heun Tsang remained embroiled in his own problems from prior to 733 AD till 737 AD. China started acting against Tibet only after 737 AD.Even then, it was compelled to take help of Kashmir. Where Kashmir didnot help them, the Chinese were defeated.

However, during this intervening period, there is no record that this region was controlled by Tibet. Therefore, it becomes clear that at least till then Lalitaditya had kept the region between Tibet to Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan under his leash. We can gauge the prevalent situation from the fact that Tibet had to marry its princess to an influential leader in Gilgit to regain its control over the region.[B]

Besides, if we look at the Arab history of this period, we can see clearly that the Arabian rule over Balkh had weakened. The opinion that the Arabs were affected due to China in Tokharistan because the Umayyad Caliphate was in decline is not true since the Arabs were ruling Balkh since the seventh century. Since China was affected because of that, it had taken help of Kashmir, Kabul, Zabul and other smaller rulers against the Arabs. Also, the people of Tokharistan were engaged in rebellious activities from time to time. The Arab delegations from Tokharistan also went to the Chinese Court regularly. However, the fact remains that China could not establish its ascendancy over them as well.

The Arabs continued to destroy Buddha Viharas, Buddha idols and books and forced conversions. Lalitaditya couldnot but take cognisance of this. In that sense, it is not surprising that after uprooting the Arabs from Sindh/Gandhar, to free Tokharistan from them or at least free the trade routes from their control became his priority.

Through his delegation, he informed the Chinese Court in clear terms that he and Yashovarman have freed five routed passing through Tibet. This means, it had been achieved sometime between 730 and 733 AD. It is also obvious that this couldnot have been possible without defeating the Arabs entrenched in Tokharistan.The Tibetan army was occupying Gilgit. In India Yashovarman was also compelled to act simultaneously to open a front and move forward to clear the routes entering Tibet.It has to be said that this was the success of the decision to attack together. In a way, this was a joint operation conducted from two different directions.

Moreover, Al Biruni in his *Qitab al Hind* records important information, according to which the people of Kashmir celebrated a festival every year to commemorate the victory of Raja Muttai (Muktapida) over the Turks.[8]

Al Biruni wrote his book in the 11thcentury. He had spent some time in Kashmir. The victory Muktapida achieved against the Turks (Tokharistan) in the eighth century being celebrated for about three centuries afterwards cannot be without a reason or imaginary. For this reason also, one has to state firmly that Lalitaditya's victory over Tokharistan cannot be a poet's imagination. The attempt to deny Lalitaditya his credit stems from the following statement by Al Biruni. He says, "The Kashmiris call Muktapida the ruler of the entire earth, but this is said about every other ruler as well." However, the scholars failed to understand that this exaggerated belief and the victory over the Turks are two different things.Therefore, there have been attempts to deny Lalitaditya his due credit.

Another piece of important information is given by Kalhana himself. A minister named Chankuna, who had come from the Tukkhar (Tokharistan) region, built Chankuna Vihara in Kashmir (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4 -211). Even though the other information given by Kalhana about Chankuna was fictitious and he has presented Chankuna as a magician, it is now proven that this person did exist in the history. Kalhana credits Chankuna with two viharas and a stupa. Chinese travellerOu-K'ong had seen one of these viharas. He had visited Kashmir during 759 to 763 AD. This was the last phase of Lalitaditya's reign.

Kalhana says thatChankuna had attained an important position in Lalitaditya's court. Ou-K'ong mentions Chankuna as 'Jiangjun'. This is the original Chinese word meaning army general.

The word Tsiang-Kiun or Jiangjunfor an army general was used in Tokharistan because of the Chinese influence. The designation 'Jiangjun' was

adopted in Kashmir as 'Chankun' due to tonal variation. The Jiangjun Vihara mentioned by Ou-K'ong was the one built by Chankuna. The designation Jiangjun later appears in *Rajatarangini* as Chankuna, the proper noun.[9]

We do not know the original name of Chankuna. According to Kalhana, his brother-in-law Ishanchandra had also come to Kashmir.He too did a lot of charitable work there. Once we understand that Chankuna means 'army general', it becomes obvious that he had a military life. When his designation becomes his proper name, we can understand how deeply the person is involved in his job or maybe the people had made his designation his identity.

How did this Tokhari general come to Lalitaditya?

No foreign army general would go to a faraway land for service by mere invitation. We can only estimate that the rebellious army commander must have caught the eye of Lalitaditya during the latter's Afghan sojourn during 730-733 AD when he won in Tokharistan.He must have taken the general on to work for him.

In this respect, Hermann Goetz's analysis appears more plausible.

According to Goetz, the Kashmiri art during Lalitaditya's tenure shows an influence not of Madhya Desha but of Afghanistan. It was the influence of the Buddha images carved at Bamiyan (Tokharistan) that led Lalitaditya to have the giant copper statue of Buddha made in the chaitya at Parihaspur. Moreover, according to Goetz, before Lalitaditya, Afghanistan was ruled by the Turkish Shahis, which were later replaced by the Hindu Shahi rulers. The Arab invasions were held off at Multan because they must have faced equally strong resistance by a powerful ruler of the nearby region (Kashmir).[10]

Of course, Tansen Sen is a strong opponent of Goetz.He says that the Turkish Shahis remained independent even afterwards and were sending their envoys to the Tang Court regularly.[11]

Though Sen's viewpoint has been pro-China, the facts argue otherwise.

During Lalitaditya's tenure, Tegin Khorasan Shah was ruling Kapisha (Kabul) and Zabulistan was being ruled by Zibil. These two were relatives and the descendants of the Turkish king Burha Tegin. Though these rulers were Turkish, they were Buddhists by faith. As per Tansen Sen, both these Shahis were independent in the eighth century. To support this opinion, he says that Kabul had sent at least six delegations to China from 737 AD to 748 AD, which shows that this kingdom had maintained its independence.[12]

Even going by Sen's opinion since we are basically talking about the period 730 to 733 AD, we cannot accept his opinion. Besides, we have seen earlier that basically the possibility of Lalitaditya making them his vassal states by war is non-existent. This means they reaffirmed their friendship with Kashmir and accepted

Kashmir's supremacy technically to protect their independence and played an important role in fending off the Arabs even later.

The same is true of Zabul. According to Sen, Zabulistan sent its delegations to China as an independent state in 720 AD and later during 742 AD to 757 AD. We have already seen that the king of Zabulistan had also sent his delegation in respect of Kashmir giving asylum to the Chinese princess Jincheng, who had been married to the king of Tibet. Once again there is anachronism created here. Since we are assuming based on the available evidence that the Gandhar-Kabul-Zabul and Tokharistan campaign had begun in 730 AD, Sen's argument cannot be acceptable in this respect as well.

During Durlabhvardhana's tenure, Kashmir's boundaries extended till Taxila in Gandhar, which fell in Kabul kingdom. Both these rulers being Turks, we cannot say that Lalitaditya's victory over the Turks is limited to victory over Kabul and Zabul. We have to include Tokharistan in it because that region was also originally under the Turkish rule.We cannot forget that the Arab rule had been established there by weakening the Turkish rule.

Of course, since Sen is pro-China, he doesnot take this timeline into consideration as well.He tries to deny Lalitaditya's achievements by any which way. He goes to such extremes that he claims the story of Tibetan queen Jincheng wishing to take asylum in Kashmir to be entirely bogus. He alleges that Zabulistan and Kashmir together plotted to make up this story through the king of Zabulistan in order to please the Chinese king and obtain his help. However, he does not mention that during this time, forget helping Kashmir, China had not even acted against Tibet and was not in a position to do that. His constant support to China despite this is difficult to understand.

Chasing the Arabs

Let's now discuss how the victory over Tokharistan was achieved in detail.

After his defeat,Arab governor Tamim and his army vacated their posts and ran towards Arabistan.We have seen that Tamim died during this retreat. No concrete information is available whether Tamim was killed during this run or died in an accident.However, the chase was so severe that the Arabs, who did manage to reach Arabistan, refused to return to Hind again.

We have to logically guess that Lalitaditya didnot just hound the Arabs back, he also provided military support to the traditional friends Zabulistan and Kabulistan to prevent the Arabs from returning, thereby strengthened the friendship. It is possible that during this campaign the two kings accepted sovereignty of Lalitaditya over them. However, the Turks that were defeated, according to Kalhana, were certainly not these kingdoms. At the most, we can say

that Kalhana is erroneous regarding mere formal acceptance of sovereignty by these kingdoms as victory over the Turks. We need to understand that the real victory was the one over Tokharistan.

However, it is quite possible that Lalitaditya took help of the armies of these two states to attack Tokharistan. They provided it willingly because they too were threatened by the Arabs.

Central Asia was politically in turmoil in the mid eighth century. Hence, not much exact information is available. We need to proceed on the available information.

In this period, every empire in Eurasia had to face revolt. The regions associated with the Silk Route were no exception because this route was a kind of lifeline. By then, the Arabs had already captured Tokharistan and had established their colonies there. Rebellion had begun there too. Al Hajjaj appointed Qutayba ibn Muslim, the governor of the entire region, to control them. He crushed all revolts includingthat in Tokharistanduring 709–710 AD. He captured the king of Tokharistan and sent him to the then capital of Arabistan, Damascus. Qutayba ibn Muslim had undertaken such a massive operation that he even captured Samarkand and set up a station there.[13]

According to the notes of Korean traveller Hyecho, during his visit (726-729 AD), the rulers of Zabulistan and Kabul-Gandhar were the Turks.They had migrated there from Tokharistan.

The Turkish king of Tokharistan, Kultu, had to abandon his capital Balkhdue to the Arab aggression. He took refuge in the hilly region,where his rule was restricted. In 729 AD, the then namesake king Qutluγ Ton Tarduhad sent his envoy to the Chinese Court and had sought their help. However, like Chandrapida, the Chinese king didnot help Qutluγ Ton Tardu as well.

On the contrary, in 749 AD, the Turkish king of Tokharistan helped China in its struggle against Tibet. In 758 AD, not only did the Turkish king of Tokharistan Unato (Chinese pronunciation) went to the Tang Court himself, he also took part in the fight between the Chinese army and the rebels as well as An Lushan.[14]This couldnot have been possible without uprooting the Arabs from Tokharistan.

It is obvious that Lalitaditya must have been required to fight several battles in Tokharistan to oust the Arabs from there.He must have then restored the throne to the original ruler,Qutluγ Ton Tardu. Later, it was inevitable to make Qutluγ a vassal king of Kashmir. Later,Tokharistan became so powerful that it helped China, even though the latter had never helped the former. This is because the new ruler of Tokharistan drew a policy for that. Taking the entire situation into consideration, the credit for this also should go to Lalitaditya. Here, it is also worth noting that history is completely and surprisingly silent on the interim period.

In this context, Tansen Sen still eulogises the Chinese power. China wasnot a powerful nation at that time. In fact, it couldnot fight even Tibet without the civil and military assistance of Kashmir. Moreover, it wasnot in a position to help any of its friendly states, including Kashmir in their fight against the Arabs.

The Arab clouds over Tokharistan had dispersed.The important routes to China had been freed. How did these events during 730 to 733 AD happen? It was not possible without Lalitaditya conquering Tokharistan and moving on to Gilgit and driving out the local rulers as well as pushing back the occupant Tibetan forces.

It appears that the attack on Tokharistanhappened via Kabul, by crossing Bamiyan. There must have been some time spent here in fighting the Arabs.During that time, the disgruntled anti-Arab forces must have joined hands with Lalitaditya. Lalitaditya defeated the Arabs and freed Tokharistan from them. Then he installed the exiled king Qutluγ Ton Tardu on the throne again.

Chankuna must have met Lalitaditya during this war. He could be the general of the exiled kingof TokharistanQutluγ Ton Tardu or could very well be the leader of a Turkish or some other tribe. Lalitaditya may have taken him on his payroll looking at his war skills or may be Chankuna himself sought the job. We can say that there is an element of truth in this. When scholars opine that Chankuna later helped Lalitadityadeploy Turkish and Chinese style army formations, which in turn increased Lalitaditya's military power.

It is not surprising that Lalitaditya's reputation spread all around because he ousted the Arabs from Tokharistan. Not only did he succeed in freeing the trade routes passing throughTokharistan, he even helped establish the local Turkish rule there. The Turkish ruler, who was thus obliged, obviously accepted Lalitaditya's supremacy. Since Lalitaditya had to fight for a long time (at least a year) to achieve victory over the Arab invaders.This was the first victory of Kashmir in a faraway place.It was celebrated in Kashmir every year till at least the 11thcentury. It should be noted here that this victory in the Turkish land wasnot over the Turks themselves but over the Arabs, who had occupied it. The importance of victory in Tokharistan had many facets. It only added to the self-respect of the Kashmiris.

Though Tokharistan was won and the trade routes passing through it were freed within that part, the same routes also passed through Baltistan/Gilgit further on and there the expansionist Tibet had established its own control over them.So,till those areas were brought under control, the trade routes couldnot be completely free. Naturally. Lalitaditya chose that route while returning from Tokharistan.

Gilgit- Baltistan

Baltistan and Gilgit are the regions in the north, situated in the remote Himalayan ranges. This part of the land adjacent to Kashmir in the north begins at the Chitral mountain range and extends up to the Kishenganga Valley that lies beyond Gilgit, Chillas and Bunji in the Sindhu valley. These areas are referred to as Bolur Major andBolur Minor in the Chinese documents. The then boundaries of Tokharistan also touched this region.

Because the straight and nearest route to China passed through this part, the efforts of China and Tibet to control it dated long back. Around 727-728 AD,Korean traveller Hyechohad taken this route.According to his notes, Buddhism was strong in this region. The Patola kings were also Buddhists. The trade routes also passed through the region. Tibet had been engaged in constant incursions,especially in Gilgit (Bolur Minor) to gain control over it. Tibet also constantly instigated the small kingdom of Jieshi in the Chitral region,due to which Kashmir had to put up with its nuisance. Ultimately, Lalitaditya put this kingdom on a permanent leash. It may be guessed that the king Mummuni, whom Lalitaditya defeated thrice, ruled Jieshi.

China being embroiled in internal troubles, it could not do much against Tibet. Tibet too had lost its control over this region because of Lalitaditya. In the year 737–738 AD, Tibet had to send its forces under the leadership of its minister Bel Kyesang Dongtsab to regain control over the region.However, Lalitadityaforced him to retreat. When the rebellion in the region grew, however, finally China sent its army under the Korean commander Kao Hienchi via Pamir in 747 AD.Only then could it establish itself in the region.[15]Here too China had to take military assistance from Lalitaditya.

This means, during 731 to 747 AD, this region was neither ruled by China nor by Tibet. Who reigned supreme here in that case? We need to understand here that since Lalitaditya had defeated and forced the Tibetan army to retreatwhile returning from Tokharistan; it was he who was the strongest in this region.

The Gilgit-Baltistan region was the nearest neighbour of Kashmir. The Gilgit residents were known as the Darads while those of Baltistan were called the Baltis. The Balti people are believed to belong to theTibetan race. There were five provinces in Baltistan, such as Khemang, Kaplu, etc. Gilgit is also found to be referred to as Dardistan. Kalhana has also mentioned the Darads of this region. The Indian puranic tales mention the Darads, along with the Kambojs. Greek historian Hirodotus has also mentioned these people. In the ancient times (fourth century), it appears that this region was under the control of the Balhikas (Balkh).

Kalhana has said that Lalitaditya defeated the Kambojs and the Darads (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4 – 165, 169). It is clear that this information is historically correct because we know from other indirect sources that Lalitaditya controlled Gilgit-Baltistan and the trade route passing through them from 732 AD to 747 AD.

These regions, especially Gilgit, being the bordering regions of Kashmir, the local rebellions of the Darads were a nuisance for Kashmir.

In reality, this route was more beneficial to China. Its trade with Central Asia took place by these routes. Therefore. Lalitaditya's suggestion, 'Maintain permanent military for security here,' was correct.Since the Chinese king did not oblige, the responsibility of keeping these routes safe from Tibet fell on Lalitaditya. Therefore, he had to immediately pay attention to the Northeast region as well.

He immediately attacked the present Dras, Ladakh and Skardu regions, freed the Zojila pass, which had been captured by Tibet.By defeating the Tibetan forces, he secured the northeastern boundaries and freed the trade routes to Chinain this region also.[16]

This benefitted Kashmir as much as it did to China. It not only increased the trade from Kashmir, the income in the form of trade tax also increased.

While chasing the Arabs off and trampling the Zabul, Kabul, Tokharistan, Gilgit and Ladakh regions, Lalitaditya brought enormous wealth to Kashmir. He brought with himself a general like Chankuna as well as expert architects and artisans from there. Historians express the possibility that he enlisted Turkish and Kamboj soldiers in his army, which is quite likely. His later, larger campaign couldnot have been possible without a mammoth army. In general, he completed all the basic requirements to take Kashmir towards becoming an empire during the period 726 to 733 AD. It is certain that soon afterwards, he began building Kashmir using the enormous wealth he had brought with him.

Beginning of creative works

When the victorious emperor, who had been at war constantly since 725 AD returned to Kashmir, we can only imagine how much his subjects must have rejoiced. Instead of taking rest after such a hectic campaign, he undertook massive construction works. He appears to have primarily undertaken the construction of the new capital city Parihaspur and the Martand Mandir.These constructions were timeconsuming.However, they were completed in his life time. The name Parihaspur itself denotes a 'city of joy'. It is quite natural that Lalitaditya himself was joyous after the victories over the Arabs and the Tibetans. We can say that he undertook establishing this town, particularly to celebrate these victories. His victory over faraway Tokharistan was unparalleled in the history of Kashmir.The Kashmiri people were justly proud of it and equally natural was their annual celebration of this victory.

As per the information provided by Kalhana, Lalitaditya had constructed a palace for himself, a few temples and a chaitya in Parihaspur. Among them, the major temples were Parihaskeshav, Muktakeshav, Govardhan Dev and Mahavarah temples. According to Kalhana, the Muktakeshav idol was made using 84,000 tolas of gold (840 kgs).Lalitaditya also constructed a chaitya in the town and installed a giant Buddha statue in it (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4, 193-203). According to Hermann Goetz, this tall Buddha statue may have been influenced by the Bamiyan (Tokharistan) style sculpture. In this same period. Lalitaditya also undertook the construction of the huge Martand Mandir (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4, 192). Clearly, all this required enormous money,which he had won during his campaign. He may have started more construction works after some time.

Kalhana says that Lalitaditya had three wives. However, he doesnot inform us exactly when these marriages took place. The three wives were Kamalavati, Chakramardika and Ishandevi. Even though Kalhana does not say so explicitly, Kamalavati may have been his favourite queen.This marriage may have taken place before Lalitaditya came to the throne.

With Ishandevi, however, Lalitaditya got marriedduring his campaign in the northwest.She is highly likely to be a Turkish princess. Considering the then custom of giving princesses in marriage to victorious or helpful kings. Moreover, Kalhana writes that Chankuna's brother-in-law Ishanchandra too came to Kashmir with him from Tokharistan. If that is true, Ishandevi could very well be the sister of this Ishanchandra.He may have come to Kashmir as her family escort. While making Chankuna his army general, Lalitaditya may have bound with him in familial relations.

Indian rulers used to follow the custom of appointing the chief of their army from the relations. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that Lalitaditya also followed it. Kalhana tells us that all the three wives of Lalitadityadirected a lot of construction work to be undertaken in Kashmir.

Lalitaditya drove the Arabs away from India, strengthened political ties with Kabul and Zabul, thereby bringing them into his circle of influence.He defeated and ousted the Arabs occupying Tokharistan, thereby making Tokharistan independent. At the same time, he defeated the Tibetans, who had captured the trade routes in Gilgit-Baltistan, at two locations.He returned to Kashmir at the end of 732 AD or the beginning of 733 AD. One can state firmly that this sequence of events is chronologically correct.After the victory in this campaign only, he sent his envoy to the Chinese king. This campaign gave him success, wealth and a wife. This spirited king was creative as well.Hence, he undertook massive creations. He thus spent the peace time in making new creations.

However, he couldnot have sat quiet for long. After traversing foreign countries,this victory-seeking king was bound to look at the central part of the subcontinent. Kanauj king Yashovarman provided him an appropriate reason.

That marked the beginning of his conquests.

* * *

Footnotes

A) Though the Tang dynasty put an end to the disintegration of China that had started four centuries ago and had regrouped it.Since 617-618 AD, the country was mired in internal revolts and political uprisings. The 50-years tenure of the second emperor of this dynasty Taizong sawChina experience peace and prosperity to certain extent. The revolt against the earlier Sui dynasty had destroyed a large part of the Chinese population. The Tangs came to power by defeating the Suis.But the country continued to be riled by internal and external threats. The Turks had been endlessly troubling China while the country had grown weak with its economygetting weaker. New reforms were being introduced in the farming sector so as to boost the tax collection.New policies were being devised to stop proliferation of fake currency. In the seventh century itself (668 AD), China had also adopted an expansionist policy.It had managed to reach the Kashmir borders by pushing the Tibetans back. Yet, it couldnot bring any region completely under its control. On the contrary, this helped Tibet become more aggressive.It started clawing into the western parts of China.

To add to these troubles, in 682 AD, the nature unleashed its fury on China.A series of floods and famines were reported in different parts. Epidemics such as plague claimed thousands of people. The entire country was turned into an open air cemetery.The extreme famine made those who were alive to even eat flesh of dead bodies of fellow humans. These calamities weakened China even further.

Upon the death of the third Tang emperor in December 683, Empress Wu took the empire in her hands. Her husband Guao Xang was visually impaired, physically disabled and constantly in a semiconscious state. Because of his disability, she decided to change the ruler. In that, she denied the right of the elder prince Xong and put him into jail. Then she crowned the younger prince Rui Xong.She herself ruled the country for the next six years as his regent. In 690 AD, she removed Rui Xong from the throne and established her Zhou dynasty as the ruling dynasty. She is the only woman in the Chinese history that was so bold. However, there was a revolt against her. She came down heavily on the rebels.She began eliminating her detractors in a cruel manner by instituting her private intelligence system.She killed or exiled her opponents systematically,including those from the Tang dynasty. Taking advantage of this, in 696 AD, the Tibetan forces advanced within 200 miles from the capital city of Changan and defeated the Chinese army. At the time, the animal keepers of the Khitan province in the northeast China rose against their oppressive governor and massacred the Chinese army under him. The valley near present day Beijing was filled with the corpses of the killed soldiers. When the rebels started entering the Tang region, the empress woke up and began releasing her prisoners on the condition that they would fight with the rebels on her behalf.

To quell the revolt in Khitan, Empress Wu sent a force of two lakh soldiers. The rebels then ran away and joined the Turks, who with their help attacked and defeated the Chinese army. These events culminated into the supporters of the Tang dynasty dethroning Wu. In 713 AD, she was forced to commit suicide.Heun Tsang became the emperor through a revolt. After coming to power, he tried his best to enforce a financial discipline in the country. He appealed to the animal keepers and farmers, who had run away during Wu's regime, to come back and even managed to arrest the rate of inflation. In short, most of his time on the throne was spent in normalising the internal situation and systems.

During this time, China abandoned its aggression and focused instead on improving diplomatic relations with its neighbours. From 737 AD, however, the reorganisation of the military began. Its army was weak due to a lack of training. Now, the mandatory conscription was limited to three years.Later, new recruitments were done. By 742 AD, the Chinese army grew to five lakh troops. For their military training, Korean commanders were hired.

In 740 AD itself, Heun Tsang fell in love with his daughter-in-law Yang Guifei. He started spending increasingly more time with her. Guifei then took many powers into her hands and began appointing her relatives to important positions in the administration. The seeds of a dreadful revolt were being sown in the country. The headquarters of the three armed forces were located in the northeast China in present day Beijing.An Lushan was the chief of the armed

forces. When he felt that Yang Guifei could pose a threat to his high position,he rebelled in 755 AD. His bloody rebellion started with one-and-a-half lakh soldiers. He took control of southern China and declared himself the emperor of China. Emperor Heun Tsang decided to attack Lushan.On the way to the Yellow River, his army too revolted against him. These rebels killed Prime Minister Yang and demanded that the emperor should award a death penalty to his mistress Yang Guifei.

Left with no option, Guifei was killed by strangling her with the lash of a whip. In 757 AD, Lushan was killed too. The revolt, however, continued. The scattered rebels continued to plunder and pilfer. Emperor Heun Tsang managed to quell the revolt and completed the task of taking over the capitals of the various provinces. All this, however, cost the Chinese army a great deal. China was no more in a condition to look into any international issue, a situation the Turks and Tibet took advantage of. This situation continued till 768 AD.*(China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty,* Charles D. Benn,Oxford University Press, 2004, pp*2-10)*

China's military had been emaciated during Lalitaditya's tenure while Tibet was emerging as a superpower. This is the background of why Lalitaditya had to carry the responsibility of fighting against the Arabs as well as Tibet. The reader will also see from this how ridiculous the claim that Lalitaditya was the vassal king of China is. The information about Lalitaditya's activities in the Tarim valley is not found in the Chinese court documents because in Lalitaditya's lifetime, especially in its later part, China was itself into a mess.

B) Although Tibet's political history is shrouded in mystery, we get quite a lot of information about the important events of the eighth century. A good amount of information can also be found in the records of the Tang Court. Since the information from the Tibetan sources may not be accurate, the information available to us is as follows -

During the period 704 to 755 AD, Khri-lde-gtsug-brtsan, the son of Tridu Songtsen was the emperor of Tibet. History also knows him as 'Me Angtsom'. Me Angtsomliterally means 'bearded grandfather'. However, when he became the emperor, Khri-ldewas all of seven years old. (According to some, he was an infant of a few months and that his mother had rebelled and enthroned him in her lap). Lha Balpo was the son of the earlier emperor Songtsen and an heir to the throne.But when Me Angtsom came to power by sidelining him, Lha revolted. He was ultimately defeated but was not killed. He was just stripped off his rights.

Khri-lde married the Chinese princess Jincheng in 710 AD. As a result, even though Tibet had internal conflicts on its borders with China, it remained quiet. Jincheng was, in fact, the daughter of the king of the Yong province. She was

adopted by the Chinese emperor Xong and had given her to the Tibetan emperor in marriage. This was certainly a politically motivated marriage.

In 724 AD, Jincheng wrote to the king of Kashmir (Tarapida) requesting him political asylum. Tarapida accepted her request. However, other sources show that perhaps she never actually went to Kashmir. The information about her exact reasons to desert Tibet (her emperor husband) is not available.

Earlier, in 722 AD, Tibet made an incursion in Gilgit region but China ousted them with the help of Tarapida. There must be some connection between the reigniting of the Sino-Tibet conflict and the decision by Jincheng to leave Tibet.

In 727 AD, Khri-lde invaded the Dunhuang province in northwest China and captured it. He also took over the Turkish and Arab regions in the west that were ruled by China. However, the Chinese reclaimed these regions in 728 AD. In 730 AD, there was a peace treaty between Tibet and China. A pillar was also erected to commemorate the treaty with its clauses carved on the pillar. Soon, however,the treaty was breached and the pillar was destroyed as well.

In 736 AD, Tibet invaded Gilgit once again. This time China sent its small army to Gilgit for the first time. Kashmir (Lalitaditya) repelled the attack with the help of this army and retained Gilgit. Ultimately, in order to establish diplomatic relations with Gilgit, Tibet gave away its princess Khri-Ma-Lod to the pro Tibet king of Gilgit in marriage.

In 738 AD, China took back the region in the Hohangho river valley, given to Tibet as dowry.

Circa 737 AD, the anti-Buddhist king of Khotan began the torture of the Buddhists in his kingdom. According to a book written in Khotan, we learn that Jincheng offered refuge to the bhikkhus, who ran away from Khotan. We also learn that Jincheng died due to smallpox. It is believed that she died between 739 and 741. The anti-Buddhist people put the blame of her death and the smallpox epidemic on the emperor, who gave shelter to the Buddhists. Once again, the torture of the Buddhists began due to this. Many bhikkhus ran away to Gandhar and Koshambi.

In 740 AD, China recaptured its old regions like Anrong. In this way, the periodical Sino-Tibetan conflicts continued till 756 AD. Obviously, there are many loose ends in this information. The information from the Tibetan sources being sketchy, it is difficult to reconstruct the history with confidence. However, the chronology as given above is generally correct. It would certainly help us understand Lalitaditya's history to some extent.

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Chapter 6

Lalitaditya's adversary Yashovarman

Yashovarman was a contemporary of Lalitaditya and was a powerful king in the north India. He was the ruler of Kanauj (Kanyakubja) kingdom. The Arabs had tried to attack him as well but they failed. They had to beat a retreat against him too. We have already seen how, later, Lalitaditya and Yashovarman opened a joint front against the Arabs and drove them away from India.

Later, Lalitaditya alone hounded the retreating Arabs off.In doing so, he conquered Kabul, Zabul and ultimately Tokharistan. Yashovarman had to leave the campaign as the Tibetan danger loomed large over Kanauj, Bihar and Bengal. He needed to ward off Tibet. Also, since Tibet had blocked the trade routes,commerce was suffering. Yashovarman turned back and went to fight the Tibetan forces.

In 731 AD, he also sent his envoy to China for help against the Tibetan invasion. Though China didnot help him in any way, he defeated Tibetan army on the borders of Madhya Desha, Bihar and Bengal on his own steam in 731-732 AD.

Around the same time. Lalitaditya freed the routes passing through Gilgit and Ladakh as well. The records of the delegation sent by Lalitaditya to China in 733 inform us that this was their joint operation. This shows that at leastTill 733 AD, the military cooperation between the two major powers, Lalitaditya and Yashovarman, was intact. In fact, the overall picture that emerges is that these two rulers had undertaken a joint operation against the Arabs and the Tibetans simultaneously, but from two different directions.

There were Turkish officers in the court of Yashovarman. One of his ministers was also a Turk by the name Tikina,who looked after the northern part of Yashovarman's kingdom, as mentioned in the Nalanda inscription. Possibly, Yashovarman employed some Turks from Gandhar during the joint war against the Arabs. However, the trend of enlisting Turkish officers in service was started by Lalitadityaand Yashovarman. It is important to note that they modified their military structure and made it stronger thereby.

It is easy to answer whether their alliance was born out of their friendship or out of the practical need to face the foreign invasions. For them, the highest priority was to ward off the Arab menace. That being their practical need of the hour, the two rulers came together and not only did they repel the Arab forces, they also thwarted the Tibetan forces fulfilling their immediate need of freeing their trade routes. Therefore, it has to be said that their alliance was not because of their friendship; rather it was their sensible political stance.

Because their alliance was purely for the need of the hour, for the same reason, their conflict was inevitable. Precisely, that is what happened.They became adversaries. History shows that the enmity resulted in a war, in which Yashovarman was defeated. This is regarded as a very significant moment in the brilliant career of Lalitaditya. It was not easy to defeat a powerful king like Yashovarman. For this reason, we need to study Yashovarman properly and then discuss how they drifted apart and finally stood against each other in a war.

Though history is silent over Yashovarman's origins and his ascent to power, from the available contemporary evidence, even if obscure, we can form a broad judgment. The history of around 80-90 years that had elapsed between Harshavardhan and Yashovarman is missing altogether.

The seventh century king of Kanauj, Harsha, died without an heir. As a result for about a century thereafter, there was a political vacuum in Kanauj. Several small and big feudatories had begun to independently enjoy power in their respective regions during this period. According to *Chach Nama*, as we have seen earlier, when Mohammad Qasim invaded India, Kanauj was ruled by a king named Harchander. There is no historical record about who this Harchander was and how did he get to the throne of Kanauj. Noted archaeologist Alexander Cunningham had tried to estimate about the kings of Kanauj between Harsha and Yashovarman. However, since he was unable to provide sufficient supporting evidence for his opinion, it did not gain acceptance.[1]

Even *Gaudavaho*, the incomplete epic by Vakpati, does not name the exact family Yashovarman belonged to. From this poetic book, replete with similes and metaphors characteristic of poetry, one has to distil history with a great effort. According to the information provided by Vakpati, Yashovarman was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu or was a Chandravanshi Kshatriya. Obviously, this information is of little avail. In Cunningham's opinion, he was from the Maukhari family. Some Jain sources inform us that Yashovarman was a descendent of Chandragupta Maurya.[2]

The court poets linking their king to some ancient, great family or declaring them to be the divine incarnations in their eulogistic poetic compositions is not a new phenomenon. In reality, Yashovarman is likely to be one of the powerful feudal lords or even the son of King Harchander. If the latter guess is true, we can also imagine that he had come to power smoothly without any revolt because if he had ascended the throne through a revolt or war, Vakpati would have surely added the event in the list of Yashovarman's achievements. The fact that he doesnot do so supports the guess that Yashovarman did not come to power by ousting Harchander, rather he was the son and heir to Harchander.

There is no consensus among historians about even the exact year of his ascension. According to Tripathi, his regime ran between 725 and 752 AD.[3]Shankar Pandit, however, says that Yashovarmanruled during the end of seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century. Pandit's opinion is unacceptable because his overall chronology itself is wrong, as we have seen in a previous chapter. Similarly, Tripathi's opinion also is unrealistic because as we are going to see later, it doesnot match the records of the other contemporary events. If we accept Tripathi's opinion, it would mean that Lalitaditya and Yashovarman came to power simultaneously. The contemporary evidence is contrary to this view.

After 725 AD, we have seen that Lalitaditya and Yashovarman had to face the Arab invasions. Tripathi doesnot regard him as an influential and great king. However, since it is a fact that he was powerful enough to send his minister to the

Chinese court in 731 AD;he was useful in repelling Tibet soon after the Arabs,one cannot accept Tripathi's assessment that he was an ordinary king.

During the turbulent period of conflicts with the Arabs and Tibetans, Yashovarman could not have achieved victories in all directions as described by Vakpati. The Arab invasions continued on one side Tibet was also creating nuisance on the other side. Though Qasim had attacked Kanauj during Harchander's reign, *Chach Nama* informs us that Harchander had thwarted his attack. This means Yashovarman had received the legacy of a kingdom that was quite powerful already. Yashovarman achieved the victories described by Vakpati after he was free of the Arab and Tibetan troubles. Of course, one needs to check the veracity of those victories as well.

At least till 715 AD, Harchander was the king of Kanauj. Yashovarman couldnot have come to power in 725 AD because when Korean traveller Hyecho visited Kanauj in 723/724 AD, Yashovarman was not only already the king of Kanauj but he was also busy in expanding his kingdom. Therefore, Tripathi's opinion cannot be accepted.

Secondly, Yashovarman's victories are recorded in *Gaudavaho.*Even allowing for its exaggeration and mystic aura created by imagination in it, there is not much room to doubt about its closeness to the truth. When Yashovarman fought with Lalitaditya, the former was already a powerful king in central India. Some of his victories described by Vakpati were achieved prior to 725 AD.The rest of them, which can be historically proved to a large extent,are from the post 733 AD period. In between the two, he was busy fighting the Arabs and the Tibetan forces.

The style of Vakpati's description of Yashovarman's victories is akin to that of Kalhana. If we go by Kalhana, Lalitaditya fought with Yashovarman after he won Doab and defeated him. Moreover, Kalhana goes on to say that Lalitaditya then conquered nearly all the other regions that Vakpati has described in Yashovarman's account of victories. However, Kalhana doesnot give us the reason behind Lalitaditya's attack on Yashovarman. He rather tells us that Lalitaditya set out to win kingdoms in all directions in a bid to expand his kingdom (*digvijaya*).In the process, he defeated Yashovarman. This theory doesnot stand. Nevertheless, even after discounting Kalhana's exaggeration, Lalitaditya's various victories in central India are historical facts.

This raises some serious issues for us.

First and foremost issue is when did Yashovarman come to power exactly, and how?

Secondly, when did Yashovarman undertake his own *digvijaya* and how far and wide did he travel for it?

Thirdly, when exactly did Lalitaditya and Yashovarman fight and why?

The fourth and final issue is who is telling the truth, Kalhana or Vakpati? Is it that Kalhana merely tried to copy Vakpati and equated Lalitaditya to Yashovarman by showing that the former emulated the latter in nearly all the victories?

These questions are important because attempts to prove Lalitaditya great or ordinary have been made based on precisely these questions. We need to answer these questions appropriately and evaluate both, Lalitaditya and Yashovarman.

When did Yashovarmancome to power?

We know that *Gaudavaho* does not mention the exact year of Yashovarman's ascension to throne. We also know that according to *Chach Nama*, Harchander was the king of Kanauj at least till 715 AD.

Korean traveller Hyecho visited Kanauj in 723/724 AD. He says, "The king of the Madhya Desha led his army from the front in the war. He was constantly at war and always emerged victorious. Though he was trying to expand his kingdom, he had not become a world-beater yet."

This means Yashovarman was trying to consolidate his power even though he had come to the throne not long ago. His *digvijaya* had not begun till then. One can infer, though not quite accurately, that Yashovarman ascended the throne of Kanauj sometime between 715 and 720 AD. Though we do not know whether he came to the throne as the heir to Harchander or he came by means of a revolt, the former option is more plausible because even Vakpati doesnot suggest any dispute regarding his ascension.

Vakpati says at one place in his *Gaudavaho*, "When the earth had started shaking due to the fear of the demons, Yashovarman stabilised her." Mishra suspects that Vakpati may be referring to theArabs when he says demons (danavas).[4]In short, he may be indicating that there was some connection between the Arab invasions and Yashovarman's ascension.

However, considering Vakpati's poetic style, he doesnot appear to suggest the Arabs or any other enemy for that matter, in this instance. He has used the word demons only to lend mythological importance to his hero. From his description of the *digvijaya*, we can see that Vakpati calls the Arabs 'Parasiks',not demons. In any case,his above statement should be taken as a poetic figure of speech. Therefore, the possibility of Yashovarman coming to power as a matter of succession without any conflict appears to be more.

We find some threads of other evidence that may help us determine Yashovarman's tenure in *Prabandh Kosha*by Rajashekhar, in which he has informedabout the conversion of Yashovarman's son Ama to Jainism. According to it, King Ama, a disciple of Jain muni Bappabhatti ruled Kanauj. Bappabhatti had

initiated Ama into Jainism. *Prabandha Kosha* tells us that Ama came to the throne after the death of Yashovarman. Based on the Vikram Samvat given in *Prabandha Kosha*, scholars opine that this event must have taken place somewhere between 749 AD and 753 AD. Most of the Jain sources maintain that Yashovarman was alive in 743 AD.

Skanda Purana, however, contains information contrary to this. According to this purana, Ama was a powerful king of Kanyakubja. He and his subjects left their Vaishnava sect and adopted Buddhism, influenced by a bhikkhu. However, after some time, they returned to their original faith.[5]

If we remove the missionary zeal in both these stories, we still have the information that Ama was the son of Yashovarman, according to DC Sircar. We shall consider the Jain source only up to the point, where it helps us determine the time.

This means that Yashovarmandied a little before the coronation of Ama. Based on the dates of the Vikram Samvat as given by the Jain sources and the overall sequence of events, the opinion that Yashovarman's death occurred between 749 and 753 AD appears valid. Then we can look at the contemporary events, the overall political career of Yashovarman.One can estimate the time of his ascension to the throne, which comes to be between 715 and 720 AD.

This also means that Yashovarman had come to the power at least five to eight years prior to Lalitaditya and was senior to him. Till then, though Kanauj or the Madhya Desha hadnot become a major political power, we can say that it was certainly on the way to become one.

The probability of Harchander and Yashovarman being father and son is very high. Yashovarman doesnot appear to have risen on the political horizon of Kanauj suddenly. We have already seen the possible reason of this. From the contemporary political situation too, we can broadly analyse the military successes of Lalitaditya and Yashovarman.

In his incomplete poetry *Gaudavaho,* Vakpati has given an interesting description of Yashovarman's *digvijaya*. Vakpati's narration carries an influence of puranic style and that of Raghuvansh. For this reason, his information is sometimes larger-than-life, sometimes completely unbelievable and sometimes closer to the historical facts. His mythical and poetic style of history writing in India has created confusion in the Indian history. Moreover, Vakpati was a court poet of Yashovarman. Being contemporary to the king, several attempts have been made to find historicity in his information. This poetry has been basically written to tell how Emperor Yashovarman killed the Gaud king.However, except a few details of why and how of the killing itself, there is not much information forthcoming from it. On the contrary, most of the description is about the

digvijaya. It is important to know what a *digvijaya* means because the concept has always enamoured the public mind.

Digvijaya **campaign**

We have fantastic notions about a *digvijaya*, which are mostly influenced by theexaggerated or imaginary descriptions in epics and mythological tales. In their compositions, a majority of court poets have used nearly the same epical style to project their respective benefactor king as someone, who has won impressive victories in all directions around his kingdom.Vakpati or Kalhana are no exception to this.

A *digvijaya* is the victory achieved by a king or scholar with his war prowess or intellect over other kingdoms or scholars in all the four directions. In ancient India, kings used to leave their kingdoms with their armies and after subduing the kings in all the directions, making them accept their supremacy,they would return with gifts or obeisance money. After such return, many puranas and inscriptions inform us, these kings performed yagyas such as Rajasuya or Ashwamedha. Subsequently, they would adopt superlative honorifics like Chakravarti, Maharajadhiraj, etcto indicate that they were now the emperors and not ordinary kings.

During such campaigns, most of the rival kings preferred to accept the supremacy of these kings instead of going to war with them. Those who did not were subdued and made vassals. However, *digvijayas* were never undertaken to snatch and annex other kingdoms. The main objective was always to make others accept one's supremacy.[6]After poet Bana, the honorific 'Chakravarti' gained enormous importance.Court poets of other kings also got busy in writing the stories of *digvijayas* of their respective kings. In fact, the concept of *digvijaya* got a mystic aura. The same aura was received by the yagyas mentioned above.Their poetic descriptions were written, irrespective of the fact that the said yagya may not have been necessarily performed.

Kalhana being a relatively realistic poet, he stayed away from the yagyas or the pre *digvijaya* religious rituals. Yet, he couldnot resist the charm of the concept of *digvijaya*. Vakpati was avowedly a court poet. He called Yashovarman as 'Chakravarti'. Therefore, we cannot assess the victories of Yashovarman and Lalitaditya from their points of view.

However, thereis no evidence to show any of the kings having actually undertaken the *digvijaya* campaign. Even the story of *digvijaya* started by the Pandavas at the time of Yudhishthira's coronation is more imaginary than real. Most of the subsequent kings copied this.They got the self-eulogising descriptions

of their imaginary and symbolic victories written in the inscriptions and court poetry to impress their greatness on their subjects. The mystical charm ofthe *digvijay* campaigns was behind these endeavours.

If we read about *digvijayas* of Yashovarman by Vakpati orLalitaditya by Kalhana and try to match them with history, we will come to know their folly. We can see that even the sequence of the actual wars and those described by these poets does not match. We shall see this in detail below.

Gaudavaho **and Vakpati**

Yashovarmanwas a great warrior but he appreciated talent just as well. According to scholars, he had at his court great poets such as Kamalayudh, Vakpati and Bhavabhuti, and scholars like Atrigupta. Vakpati started writing the Prakrit poem *Gaudavaho* in the Arya meter, basically to narrate the story of how King Yashovarman defeated and killed the Gaud king. In reality, however, he ended up dismissing the scene of the killing of the Gaud king in just one arya (verse), that too in not so clear words. The rest of the poem describes the other victories of Yashovarman. It appears that Vakpati did not complete this poem.Though it is titled *Gaudavaho*, the detailed description of the assassination is not found in it. Vakpati doesnot even tell us the name of the killed Gaud king.

According to Shankar Pandit and many other scholars, since the great Yashovarman himself was defeatedwhile the poem was being written, Vakpati may have lost interest in continuing his poem. Hence, it remained incomplete.

If we go by the information provided in Jain books, including *Prabhavakcharit*, *Prabandh Kosh* and *BappabhattiSucharita*, several things come to light. According to them, Yashovarman invaded the Gaud kingdom and killed King Dharma. Then he captured Vakpati, the court poet of Dharma. Vakpati wrote *Gaudavaho* or at least a major part of it during his captivity. Obviously, his intention was to please Yashovarman and secure his release from the captivity.

Vakpati showed Yashovarman the part he had written and asked to be released with the promise that he would then write ‘how King Dharma was killed’. He titled the poem purely to impress Yashovarman. However, he avoided writing about the tragedy of his earlier master King Dharma. He may not have been interested in completing the poem necessarily. Yet, after his release, he became a friend and court poet of Yashovarman.

Mishra suggests that even if he wanted to complete the poem, since Lalitaditya defeated Yashovarman and made him his vassal, the earlier victories of Yashovarman had become redundant now.That may have been the reason Vakpati lost interest in completing the poem.[7]

In short, according to Mishra, the poem remained incomplete because Yashovarman's political career was on the wane. If we go by ShankarPandit's opinion, Yashovarman was probably not alive when the poem was written.

If we look at the other historical events though, the information provided by the Jain sources appears probable and correct.If we take it to be factual, it is obvious that Vakpati, who wrote his poem while in captivity, would eulogise Yashovarman, without whose grace he couldnot be freed. At the same time, he appears to have taken care not to depict the fall of his earlier master, the king of Gaud, Dharma.

Perhaps for this reason, Vakpati compares Yashovarmanwith Lord Vishnu, Krishna, Aja, Pruthu and deities, including Indra. He has also shown the wealth of Yashovarmanto be greater than that of Kuber. Even granting that the court poets are naturally inclined towards overstatement, Vakpati's poetic talent becomes synthetic. He also describes how the widows of the enemies killed by Yashovarman spend their lives in grief. In short, he doesnot get tired praising Yashovarman, whose favour he is seeking. After this, he starts narrating Yashovarman's *digvijaya*.

The *digvijaya*saga

According to Vakpati, Yashovarman left for his *digvijaya* at the end of a rainy season. By winter, he had arrived in the Shoan River valley. From there, he went to the mountainous Vindhya region. He paid obeisance to non-Aryan deity Vindhyavasini there and even performed human sacrifices before the goddess. According to Tripathi,this place is near Mirzapur today.Yashovarmanmust have travelled to this place via Fatehpur and Prayag.[8]

When he was in the Vindhya region, the news of his arrival made Magadh king to run away. He gathered more forces and his friendly rulers but Yashovarmanchased him and fought a fierce war with them and killed the Magadh king. Vakpati informs us that the Gaud king was also killed at this time.

Later, he attacked the Vanga king and defeated him. This victorious king then subdued the king in the south and made him a vassal before proceeding to Malay Desha and conquered it. From there, he reached the seashore. He then attacked the Parasik people and after a keenly fought war,gained victory over them as well. Thereafter, he reached the banks of river Narmada through the Western Ghats. Spending some time there, he entered Maru Desha, conquered it and made way into Thanesar. After conquering Thanesar, he spent some time in the neighbouring Kurukshetra and turned towards Ayodhya. He conquered Ayodhya and built a temple there. Then he turned towards the north, conquered the Yaksha

region. Then he returned to his kingdom. He freed the kings he had defeated and brought with him captured and told them to return to their kingdoms.[9]

Though it is titled *Killing of the Gaud King*, Vakpati has omitted from it the detailed description of the Gaud kingdom and the killing of its king. However, the fact that Yashovarmanhad conquered the Gaud kingdom has been proven by other evidence. According to scholars, perhaps Vakpati avoided the description because the Gaud king was his previous master or the poem remained incomplete.

Even then, the poetic, embellished story of Yashovarman's *digvijaya* by Vakpati is reproduced very briefly. Readers can get an idea of the high level of Vakpati's poetic talent by reading the original poem.

The description of the *digvijaya* indicates that Yashovarmanmay have toured across India. Let us see how much of it is factual. For that, we need to look at the political situation in eighth century India.One needs to match the description of Vakpati with other records of those days. That would tell us which regions Yashovarman truly conquered. This information is also useful in verifying the *digvijaya* of Lalitaditya, as givenby Kalhana in *Rajatarangini*.

India in the eighth century

The situation in North India had become politically unstable after Harsha's death. The kingdom of Kanauj had disintegrated. Harsha's minister Arjun or Arunashwa had usurped power after him. Just before his death, Harsha had sent his envoy to the Tang Court of China. In turn, Tang king Taizonghad sent his envoy Wang Xuansto Harsha's Court. When the envoy was on his way to India, Harsha died and his minister usurped the kingdom.

Unaware of Harsha's death, Wang Xuans reached Kanauj in 648 AD.But Arjun attacked the envoy and his 30 men. Wang Xuans was forced to run away to Tibet. On reaching there, he gathered a force of 7,000 Nepali and 1,200 Tibetan soldiers with the help of the Tibetan king. On June 16, 649 AD,Wang Xuans attacked Kanauj (Madhya Desha as per the Chinese records). He destroyed Kanauj and killed the treacherous Arjun, who had usurped the throne. He then proceeded to win Magadh as well.After capturing nearly 2,000 people, he returned to China. He also carried back with him a holy relic of Buddha. At the time, Nepal was ruled by Tibet and since Nepal's borders were close to the Indian borders, the number of Nepali soldiers in Wang Xuans' forces was high. Tibetan king Songtsen had conquered Nepal. The Chinese emperor Taizong was so happy by Tibet's help that he erected a statue of Songtsen in his capital.[10]

Both the Chinese and Tibetan sources provide somewhat similar information about this event.

From this, it appears that it was Arjun of Kanauj, who gave Tibet the opportunity to interfere in the Indian politics. Actually,it was improper to attack an ambassador. Of course, we do not know the reason behind the attack. Nevertheless, this was the first such attack on Madhya Desha and Magadh carried out by China,that too, with the help of Tibet. The process of anarchy in North India had thus got underway.

History of Kanauj after this event is lost in the recesses of time. Scholars have been trying hard to fill up the gap between Harshavardhan's death and Yashovarman's ascension but nothing came out of it. Before Yashovarman, at the time of Qasim's invasion, Harchander, the son of Jathal, was occupying the throne.Though *Chach Nama* says that he had threatened Qasim, according to Mishra,one cannot believe this because there are no other sources to confirm the existence of Harchander.[11]

However, there are no parallel Indian sources to support that after Harsha, Arjun usurped the kingdom.Later, the Tibetan army attacked Madhya Desha (Kanauj) and Magadh. That doesnot make these events untrue. There appears to be no reason to reject the information given in *Chach Nama* thatHarchander was ruling Kanauj at the time of Qasim's invasion.He had dared to threaten Qasim. While threatening Qasim's messengers, Harchander boasts that 'my family is ruling for the past 1,600 years starting with Chandragupta Maurya'.However, it is said that he couldnot be the descendent of Chandragupta.Therefore, his existence cannot be accepted. However, Indian kings have been known to be fond of linking themselves with the famous ancient dynasties but to deny his existence because of that is pointless. If he were weak, obviously he wouldnot have survived Qasim's attack. Even after Harchander issued an insulting threat, Qasim couldnot do anything against Kanauj is a fact.

Taking advantage of the political situation that developed as a result of Harsha's death, a feudatory lord Madhavgupta declared his independence. It appears that even after Tibet invaded Magadh his family continued to rule there. It is difficult to determine the period of the kings of that time because the available historical information is insufficient.However, one can say that even after the defeat, Magadh managed to maintain its status as a strong power.

Rajputana consisted of small states.Since they had to face the Arab invasions, they were weakened. After the Arab invasion and the second Tibetan invasion, we have seen that the political situation in North India was disturbed. Though the Arabs could not win Ujjain or Gujarat under the Maitrakas, those areas were disturbed too. There was no powerful ruler in central India while Bengal was experiencing anarchy.

In short, the situation in North India was inviting for any strong ruler to expand his kingdom. We need to note that it was during this politically unstable period, the powerful rulers Lalitaditya and Yashovarman had risen.

Yashovarman's victories

(Yashovarman's Coin. Courtesy - Smith (1906), Indian Museum Calcutta, Vol. I, Part III, p. 268.)

It is a fact that Yashovarman expanded the Kanauj kingdom to a large extent. Let us now see, based on the information given in *Gaudavaho*, in which regions Yashovarman actually expanded his kingdom.

Vakpati notes that the first victory was against the Magadh ruler. With the discovery of Yashovarman's inscription in Nalanda, Magadh, it is possible that he had conquered this area as well. Assuming that Vakpati's information about killing of the Magadh king is correct, there is a dispute about his name. According to one inscription, Jivitgupta (II) was the ruler of Magadh during Yashovarman's tenure.His victorious camp was located on the banks of Gomati River. Based on this information, Mishra says that Jivitgupta was headed towards Kanauj.That is the reason, Yashovarman launched a counterattack against Jivitgupta. He also claims that the two armies fought each other in the region of the Vindhya range.[12]

Of course, scholars differ in opinion in this respect also. According to Vakpati, the first time Magadh king ran away scared. Later, he brought together his own army and those of his friendly states and started a war against Yashovarman again. However, in this war, not only did he face defeat, he was also killed. If both

these accounts are to be believed, we can also say that Jivitgupta (II) was a descendent of Madhavgupta and deduce that Yashovarmandefeated and killed him.

That Magadh was certainly under Yashovarman's rule can be seen from the Nalanda inscription.A town called Yashovarmanpur also existed, which was probably established by Yashovarman himself. This meansthe boundaries of Yashovarman's kingdom extended at least up to Magadh.

But when did this war take place? According to Mishra, it must have happened in 725 AD and continued for at least one year. He has based his guess on the statement by Hyecho, who came to Kanauj in 724/25,saying the king of Kanauj was trying to expand his kingdom but hadnot become the world-beater yet.[13]

This is a bold theory though. Did Yashovarman achieve this victory as a part of his *digvijaya*?Or he had to undertake this war because he feared the Magadh king would attack Kanauj.

Besides, we know from the Jain sources that Yashovarmanhad defeated the Gaud ruler Dharma and killed him.

When did Yashovarmandefeat the Gauds exactly and why? Were both these victories part of his *digvijaya* orwere they fought separately at different times? It is important to discuss and clarify these points here.

Unless we understand when Vakpati started writing *Gaudavaho*, we willnot find the answers to these questions. According to Shankar Pandit, Vakpati wrote the book after Yashovarman's death or after his defeat. To support his opinion, he cites that in some instances, Vakpati had used past tense, which means when he wrote the poem, either Yashovarman was not alive or had been defeated by Lalitaditya.

For example, "…At that time, he (Yashovarman) had a humble but dear Vakpati, who was known as Kaviraj"or "Please, tell us how did Yashovarmankill the king of Magadh in the past…"[14]

Shankar Pandit has deduced from the first statement thatwhen Vakpati wrote the poem, Yashovarman was not alive. He inferred from the second statement that Yashovarman had been defeated by Lalitaditya long ago. However, this is not logical. It is hazardous to determine time from these statements.

Basically, it is already mentioned in the book that Yashovarman completed his remaining *digvijaya* after killing the Magadh king. To defeat the Magadh king being a significant event, it must have had a great amount of impact on the public. Since the other victories are essentially Vakpati's imagination, he used the word 'pura' meaning 'in the past'. That, however, does not mean the victory over Magadh was an old event. Vakpati had no reason to write this eulogy after Yashovarman's death.He was unlikely to write it after his defeat by Lalitaditya.

If we go by the Jain sources, we have seen that the killing of the Gaud king was the last event of Yashovarman's brilliant career.Later, Vakpati was in

captivity. He wrote this incomplete poem during his captivity, which means obviously,Yashovarman had achieved victory over Magadh before the Gaud king was defeated and Vakpati was jailed. At that time,Gaud king Dharma'scapital was Lakshanavati. The Jain sources tell us that after Yashovarman defeated and killed him, he had annexed the Gaud kingdom to his kingdom. However, Vakpati himself mentions the Gaud king and his death only in the passing. We have seen that.

If we assume that Vakpati wrote *Gaudavaho* before Lalitaditya defeated Yashovarman and made him his vassal and during his captivity, it must have happened after 737 AD because as we will see further, we can determine the time of beginning of the Lalitaditya-Yashovarmanconflict to be circa 738 AD.

We will have to then assume that Vakpati was captured in 736/37.He immediately started writing the book to appease Yashovarman.After being released, within three years i.e., by the time Lalitaditya defeated Yashovarman, he wrote this incomplete work. This means he wrote the book from 736/37 AD to at least 740 AD, which is not impossible.

It is certain that the victory over Magadh predates the victory over Gaud. However, this could not have happened before 733 AD because then Yashovarman was busy fighting Tibet.

Therefore, we can logically say that the Yashovarman–Magadh conflict took place sometime between 733 and 736 AD. However, though the victory over Magadh took place before 737 AD, we must understand that it couldnot be as far back as 725 AD because in that case, the other historical events do not match.It gives birth to an anachronism. In fact, it appears that the victory over the Arabs was the first and that over Gaud was the last. Magadh happened sometime between.

Similarly, though both the victories are facts, it is equally true that they werenot a part of any *digvijaya* campaign. It is easy to see that Vakpati hasused the poetic licence to mix facts with fiction. He has fitted such victories in the traditional *digvijaya* campaign.

Vakpati has also written about the victory over Bengal (Vanga). Scholars have even tried to find out the ruler of Vanga Desha at that time. According to Mishra, Lalitchandra could have been the contemporary king of Vanga.But if indeed Yashovarman had attacked Vanga ever, it had to be during the period of anarchy resulting from Lalitchandra's death, not before that.[15]

Of course, whether the Vangacampaign really took place or not is not certain.But it is not entirely improbable that Yashovarman took over this kingdom, which was beseeched by anarchy and was the immediate neighbour of the Gaud kingdom.

Vakpati also claims that Yashovarmanachieved victories in Maru Desha. However, looking at the contemporary situation in Rajputana, it does not seem

true. At the most, Yashovarmanmay have passed through this region during his war with the Arabs.However, the available sources about the contemporary Rajputana show Yashovarman's victories in the region to be a poet's imagination.

Yashovarman's kingdom appears to extend till river Narmada in central India. Jain book *Prabhandha Kosh* mentions that Gopalpur, the present day Gwalior, was under Yashovarman.[16]Going by this information, we have to accept that Yashovarman had extended the boundaries of Kanauj till Madhya Pradesh in the south, whichis plausible.

Gaudavaho mentions the attack on the Parasik people. Vakpati actually means the Arabs when he says the Parasiks. In those days, the Arabs had troubled Rajputana, Gujarat and central India. However, this was between 726 and 730 AD. It is possible that Yashovarmanmay have had to visit Rajputana while fighting the Arabs several times. Though he never conquered Rajputana, during his joint campaigns with Lalitaditya against Junayd al-Murri and Tamim, he was successful in ousting the Arabs after crossing Rajputana. This means, Vakpati's information about the victory over Rajputana appears to be based on misconceptions. Traversing a region does not amount to win it. None of the contemporary sources confirms this information. However, even though Rajputana wasnot conquered, it is possible that Kanauj's borders touched those of Rajputana.

Vakpati also claims that Yashovarmanachieved victory over North India ruled by the Yakshas.But this information too does not stand against the historical evidence. He may have gone up to Jalandhar in Punjab. Jalandhar was on the boundary between Kanauj and Kashmir, as noted by Hyecho in 723/24. We can say that till the war with Lalitaditya, this was the northern boundary of Kanauj.

Victory over the South?

Vakpati further describes that Yashovarmanconquered Maharashtra or southern India.However, again, looking at the contemporary political situation in the south, it is easy to see that this was impossible. Strong powers such as the Chalukyas, the Gang and the Rashtrakutas ruled in the south. If Yashovarmanhad really come to the south for his *digvijaya*, he would have had to face severe resistance. Besides, such invasion would have found mention in the south Indian literature and inscriptions, as was the custom. That being not the case, we have to take the victory over south as mere poetic imagination.[17]

Basically, Yashovarman's victories werenot a part of any *digvijaya* campaign.We have to say that the wars he had to fight when need arose and the victories he had, Vakpati stringed them together, along with some fiction in his *digvijaya*. Yet, thereis no doubt that Yashovarmanwas a powerful ruler. Let us now estimate the actual expanse of his kingdom.

Yashovarman's empire

In the light of the above discussion, we can review in which regions Yashovarman's empire had spread.

His empire could have spread between Magadh (Bihar), Gaud and Vanga (Bengal) in the east and at the most,till the boundary of Rajputana to the west. In the north, it could have been up to Jalandhar in Punjab, in the northwest, up to Sthaneshwar,if we go by *Prabandha Kosh*, up to Gopalgiri (now Gwalior) in the south. It is, however, impossible to determine how many of the kingdoms in these regions were the vassal states and how many had actually been annexed to Kanauj.

The chronology and the exact years of Yashovarman's victories can be guessed. It should be as below –

1. Arab War – 726 to 730 AD
2. Tibet War – 731 to 733 AD
3. Magadh War – 735 to 736 AD
4. Gaud War – 736 to 737 AD
5. Wars with smaller states in central India – 723 to 737 (these may have been periodical)

The explanation of this chronology is as below –

It should be clear by now that these wars havenot been fought under *digvijaya* as claimed by Vakpati. Like Kalhana, even Vakpati does not mention the Tibetan threat and the wars with them. These wars were fought at different times and for different reasons. Yashovarman emerged victorious in them because of his strong army.

The Magadh and Gaud wars were fought after the Tibet campaign. Actually, the aggressive stance of Tibet must have affected Bengal-Bihar first because these regions are close to the Tibetan borders. History doesnot know to what extent the local powers helped Yashovarman to rein in Tibet.

It is quite possible that in his attempt to free the routes passing through Bengal-Bihar by driving out the Tibetan aggressors, Yashovarman did not receive much cooperation from the local rulers. In fact, especially in Bengal, it was an anarchic situation at the time.Therefore, Yashovarman may have thought it better to take these regions over. That must be the reason we see that he conquered Magadh and Gaud in quick succession.Otherwise, he doesnot seem to have any particular enmity with them so as to subdue and kill their rulers. Vakpati too doesnot mention anything about it. In fact, he doesnot mention the wars of Yashovarman with the Tibetans at all. It clearly shows that he wanted to write only the traditional *digvijaya* story and not history.

As compared to Lalitaditya, after driving the Arab invaders away, we can see that Yashovarman expanded his kingdom further. Lalitaditya had to achieve victories in the relatively treacherous lands of the stronger tribals. In the case of Yashovarman, barring Tibet and the Arabs, it was easier to win against the weaker and militarily lesser central Indian states, Magadh and Gaud kingdoms. Therefore, even though Yashovarman's empire was geographically larger, Lalitaditya proved that he was superior in the military power by defeating Yashovarman.

But why was there a conflict between Yashovarman and Lalitaditya in the first place? Why did these great warriors of their time, who had joined hands to fight the common enemies once, stood against each other? Why did Lalitaditya feel compelled to establish his rule over all the regions conquered earlier by Yashovarman?

It is essential to find the answers to these questions. This is mainly because the history, including Kalhana, is mum on this as well. However, let us try to use our logic and the available sources to answer these questions.

* * *

Footnote –

We do not know much about Yashovarman's personal life. Whatever information is available is mostly of indirect nature. Scholars such as Atrigupta and poet-playwrights like Bhavabhuti had a place of honourin his court. He was himself a playwright and had written a six-act play called *Ramabhyudaya*. The manuscript of that play is not available today, but excerpts from it can be found in various books including *Dhwanyaloka* and *Natyakshanantarkosha*. Like his sword, he used his pen skilfully as well. He doesnot appear to have shown much interest in building and construction like Lalitaditya did. There is a mention in *Gaudavaho* that he built a temple overnight. If that is true, it must be a small temple or else it may purely be Vakpati's imagination, one can say. Besides, there is not a single temple in the name of Yashovarman in Ayodhya. He had, of course, built a town called Yashovarmanpur in Bihar.It still exists with the name *Goshrava*. It also proves that Yashovarman ruled Magadh.

From *Gaudavaho,* one learns that in religious matters, he was more inclined towards the Shakta sect. Even then, like the other contemporary rulers, he was liberal in his religious outlook. There are references found about him constructing a vihara. In the later part of his life, he had adopted Jainism, according to *Prabandha Kosh*. However, Mishra doesnot agree with this. But since the Jain literature contains the information that his son Ama had become a Jain, the possibility cannot be rejected outright.

Yashovarman's favourite queen was Suyasha.He begot his son Ama from her. He succeeded Yashovarman naturally. Ama was also an able warrior.He had attacked Rajgriha, according to the Jain sources. We have already seen that Vakpati does not give any details about Yashovarman's personal life.

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Chapter 7

Yashovarman's defeat: Expansion of the empire

We have seen the available history of Yashovarman in the previous chapter. Though he was not an all-conquering emperor as described by Vakpati, there is no doubt that he was a powerful emperor of contemporary India. His contemporary Emperor Lalitaditya was equally powerful and valiant. His victories over the Arabs, Baltistan, Gilgit and Tibet are testimony to his military power. The two succeeded in driving the Arabs out together. They freed the trade routesthrough a well-coordinated operation from two sides against the strong and expansionist Tibet. This was the greatest success of the combined military strategy of these two emperors.

Not exactly personal friends, the two possessed the diplomacy to join hands to thwart the impending dangers. Historians have put forward many theories about why Lalitaditya felt compelled to attack Yashovarman.

According to Mishra, Lalitaditya became jealous and envied Yashovarman because the latter achieved stupendous victories in expanding his empire, thereby adding to his glory and strength. He was perhaps anxious that sooner or later Yashovarman may eye his (Lalitaditya) empire as well. Vakpati tells us that Yashovarman had camped in the Kurukshetra area. Lalitaditya had inherited control over a large part of Punjab. Korean traveller Hyecho noted that the two kingdoms shared the boundaries at Jalandhar.There was tension between the two over it. Realisation of the threat to his kingdom with Yashovarman's arrival in Kurukshetra may have prompted the ambitious Lalitaditya to become aggressive and adopt an expansionist policy. Both the emperors attempted to extend their respective boundaries till river Yamuna and inevitably they came to loggerheads.[1]

Many historians have given the boundary dispute between the two emperors as the cause of the war between them. The western and northwestern Punjab had been under Kashmiri rule since the time of Durlabhvardhana. Naturally, a long stay of Yashovarmanin Kurukshetra discomfited Lalitaditya.That, according to most historians, ultimately led to the war.

Marc Stein also maintains that since the history of the political happenings in the eighth century North India is foggy, it is difficult to guess why Lalitaditya invaded a distant kingdom like Kanauj. However, Lalitaditya must have declared a war on Yashovarman in his attempt to extend his boundary at Jalandhar up to river Yamuna.[2]

Kalhana, however, does not give any reason for the war. He takes this victory to be a part of Lalitaditya's *digvijaya* campaign. According to him, "When he (Lalitaditya) launched his *digvijaya,* he used to abandon his anger on seeing the

opposite kings standing on the battlefield with their hands folded in respect. When the thunderous noise of his war drumsrent the air, people ran away leaving their homes and estates behind. Such towns looked like women having had an abortion… Like the sun revolving around the earth constantly, that victorious king spent most of his days in travelling. When he collected the obeisance money in the east, the turban of prestige over his head had lent glory to the Antarved region." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4, 128-132).

If we go by Kalhana's narration, Lalitaditya was on his *digvijaya* campaign. He first took over many smaller kingdoms,thereby brought Antarved under his control.Only then, he charged towards Kanyakubja. He fought with Yashovarmannot because of any enmity with Kanyakubja but out of his ambition to conquer the world.

However, if we look at a further report of Kalhana, he seems to contradict himself. We will discuss this a little later.

Let us first review the opinion of Mishra and other historians based on Vakpati's statement about Kurukshetra.

While describing Yashovarman's *digvijaya* in his *Gaudavaho,* Vakpati states that –

"Yashovarman camped at Shrikantha (Thanesar) and Kurukshetra for a long time. He visited the locations related to the Mahabharata around Kurukshetra. He also entertained himself in the company of beautiful women playingwater sports with them." (*Gaudavaho*, VV, 485-494)

Thanesar was the capital of the ancient confederation of Shrikantha. This region is a part of present day Haryana. This region close to Punjab had been included in the Kanauj kingdom long time ago. The boundaries of Kashmir had reached up to Jalandhar, meeting those of Kanauj. Though there were minor problems between the two states over them, they existed during the Korean traveller Hyecho's stay in India, in 723/24 AD. The Arab and Tibet issues cropped up after that.Since Yashovarman and Lalitaditya had joined hands against the Arabs and Tibet, the possibility of them having settled the border dispute that time itself is high. At least, it certainly wasnot as intense then. Therefore, it would be improper to link the war with the border dispute and Yashovarman's extended stay in Kurukshetra.

Besides, in Vakpati's description of the time at Kurukshetra, nowhere does Yashovarman come across in an aggressive mood. Rather, he appears to be a family man on vacation enjoying water sports with beautiful women and visiting the places of pilgrimage. Also, considering the epic-like style of this description, the probability of it beinga fiction is high.

Hyecho'sinformation is of 723/24 AD.The conflict between Lalitaditya andYashovarman took place much later, at least 15 years after that. In the

meantime, i.e. till 733 AD, both had maintained a political friendship. The two together freed the trade routes from Tibet as per the Chinese Court records. We can, therefore, infer that even though only political, the friendship continued.Hence, the border dispute may have been settled.These diplomatic kings wouldnot have undertaken the joint campaign in the backdrop of the border dispute.

The opinion of Mishra that the conflict arose out of envy is also not acceptable. Lalitaditya doesnot come across as someone who would become jealous of Yashovarman's *digvijaya* and motivated by his ambition would attack him. Basically, the *digvijaya* described by Vakpati has not happened at all. We can only say that Vakpati has mixed the facts and fiction regarding Yashovarman's incidental wars as per convenience and has presented a semi-historical poem as a *digvijaya* campaign.

Killing of the Gaud king was Yashovarman's last victory. It seems improbable that he killed the Gaud king, annexed his kingdom and then went to Kurukshetra on a pilgrimage and played water sports there. Even if it were to be so, it is improbable that just his presence in vicinity would make Lalitaditya feel insecure.

From Vakpati's description, it doesnot appearthat Kashmir had any threat from Yashovarman at all. Though Vakpati's poetry is fictional, nowhere has he mentioned Yashovarman fighting a war against Kashmir during his *digvijaya* campaign. This means even granting that Yashovarman was a conqueror, he had not included Kashmir in his campaign. This is because Kashmir was itself a strong empire.Vakpati, who belonged to the same time, must be aware of that.

We have seen that after 733 AD. Lalitaditya returned to Kashmir from Ladakh by destroying Tibet's ascendancy. Soon after, he undertook important construction works. The new capital town of Parihaspur and the Martand Mandir were massive jobs. He had brought with him enormous amount of wealth in the form of taxes and obeisance money, besides a few Turkish army commanders. The first challenge facing Lalitaditya was the retraining of the Kashmiri army in modern warfare and to strengthen it. Also, till 736 AD, he had held off against Tibet for five years without the help of China, which means during this time and even later, he was busy on this front as well.

Later in 736 AD, Tibet took an aggressive stance in Gilgit threatening to capture it.So, Lalitaditya had to attend to Gilgit and also take care not to lose control of Tokharistan. At that time, China was busy reorganising its forces.Therefore, their help couldnot be expected. It is noteworthy that Lalitaditya never sent his envoy to China after 733 AD. It is obvious that this couldnot have happened unless he had the confidence of being strong enough to defeat Tibet alone.

In the end, Tibet tried to win Gilgit by marrying its princess Khri-Ma-Lod with a leader in Gilgit also means that Tibet had become desperate to control Gilgit or at least engage into a relationship with it. That, however, did not help Tibet.

However, Lalitaditya may have incurred a major financial loss because of getting sucked into this conflict. Though there is no information about how many wars he fought with the Tibetan forces, it must have been a prolonged war in the hilly region. Lalitaditya won even this time and established his control by ousting the Tibetan forces.

Kalhana tells us how much the Tibetans feared Lalitaditya.But he doesnot give us the details of war. Nonetheless, Lalitaditya's victories over Tibet are a historical fact.

Having stopped Tibet from advancing, it was natural for this brave king to look at the kingdoms in southern India. He may have first extended the boundaries of his kingdom beyond Taxila in Gandhar by taking over the smaller Shahi rulers in that region. Marc Stein corroborates this opinion.[3]At the same time, he naturally had a keen eye on the political situation in central India, where Magadh and Gaud had come under Yashovarman. Yashovarman's empire was probably up to river Narmada. It is not surprising if Lalitaditya, who had expanded his kingdom in the north well beyond Gilgit/Baltistan and Tokharishtan, to think it necessary to enter the central India as well.

Besides, during the joint campaign against the Arabs (726 to 730 AD), there must have been an issue about distribution of the territories of Multan, Gandhar, Punjab and Sindh, from which the Arabs were ousted. Lalitaditya had to fight constant wars in Tokharistan, Baltistan to Ladakh while chasing the Arabs via Zabulistan. Yashovarmanalso had to return to fend off Tibet's possible invasion of Madhya Desha and liberate the trade routes. Because of that, the local rulers in the northwest, except Deval port, where the Arabs were still in control, had begun to rule independentlyagain.

It is obvious that after 733 AD. Lalitaditya took up the job of bringing these powers under his wings first. The task may have gathered momentum after 736/37 AD. He must have got time to do that only after he established his rule over Gilgit by defeating Tibet once again.

We have seen that Yashovarman was busy fighting the Gauds at the time. It was natural for him to be disturbed by the reports of the developments in the northwest on his return to his capital. He naturally wanted to have his piece of the pie. But he hadnot got time to provide attention to those parts because after the war with Tibet, he had to fight Magadh and Gaud, which kept him busy.

Now, when he got time and after Lalitaditya had started forcing the small and big Shahis of this region to become the vassals of Kashmir, Yashovarman may have woken up to the reality. He may have picked up a fight with Lalitaditya for

not giving him his share. Questioning the basis of such a demand. Lalitaditya may have refused and Yashovarman, who had never seen defeat till then, must have got incensed.The matters may have escalated to the point of an equally valiant Lalitaditya attacking Yashovarman.

Of course this is all a conjecture.But it is the closest to the truth as compared to the theories put forth by other historians for this war. No sane king would travel from Kashmir to faraway Kanauj with his army, winning other kingdoms along the way just out of jealousy or envy. The border dispute between Kanauj and Kashmir at Jalandhar was too old and possibly settled long ago, which is also unlikely to have caused the war.

Also, importantly, after Yashovarmanlost to Lalitaditya in the first battle, they had entered into a treaty, which will be discussedits outcome later.However, Yashovarmanhad entered into it because he had lost the battle and not because he had been made a vassal king. This means the objective of the war was not to destroy Kanauj or Yashovarman.

Kalhana doesnot tell us the terms of this treaty but it must be about deciding the mutual boundaries and the share that Yashovarmanwould get. Yashovarmanhad agreed to the treaty.However, a dispute arose later about the draft of the document, whichculminated into a full-scale war.

This compels us to accept the logic that this war was rooted in the distribution of regions vacated by the Arabs as a result of the joint campaign against them.

When did the war take place?

This question is answered in the earlier discussion but let us discuss it to get more clarity.

According to Mishra, the Lalitaditya-Yashovarman war took place somewhere between 736 AD and 749-753 AD. While deciding the earliest year 736 AD, he says in the footnote of his book thatLalitaditya had sent his minister Mitrasharma to the Tang Court in 736 AD. The Chinese Court records state thathe had said there that the king of Madhya Desha was his friend. So, the war couldnot have happened before 736 AD.[4]

The notable point here is that the information given by Mishra in the footnote is misleading. Lalitaditya never sent his envoy to China, except in 733 AD. His contention that Lalitaditya's delegation or envoy Mitrasharma went to China in 736 AD is not true. He has cited page 89 of Marc Stein's preface to *Rajatarangini* to support his statement. However, in reality, Stein has not mentioned anything of the kind. All he has written in the preface is that Lalitaditya might have dismissed Yashovarman from his throne after a war sometime after 736

AD. The Chinese record that Stein refers to is of 733 AD and not 736 AD. Besides, Stein has not named Mitrasharma at all in this respect.So, there is some misunderstanding on the part of Mishra.

Stein also opined that this war might have taken place after 736 AD. Mishra has made a broad guess that the war took place between 736 AD and Yashovarman's death (approximate time 749-753 AD). Since other historians have also said something similar, we do not need to consider that. We need to fix a year, which would be the closest to the truth.

In the year 736/37 AD, we have seen that Yashovarman was busy in the war with the Gauds. During this period. Lalitaditya was expanding his influence in the northwest India after defeating Tibet.Yashovarman might have been disturbed by the pending matter of distribution of territories. This dispute probably let to the escalation. These events must have happened in 737/38 AD.

Perhaps Lalitaditya thought that Yashovarman is expecting too much without much action on his part.Hence,he decided to attack him. However, to enter Kanauj. Lalitaditya had to conquer the intermediate land up to Antarved. This region consisted of a bunch of small kingdoms.Lalitaditya must have taken some time to reach Kanauj by conquering these states, collecting obeisance monies from them and crossing two major rivers, Ganga and Yamuna. Even according to Kalhana, since Lalitaditya's war with Yashovarman was a prolonged one, his officers were tired. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4, 139)

The distance between Srinagar and Kanauj is at least 1,300 km. The reason to plan a campaign so far away cannot be flimsy. A smart king like Lalitadityawas unlikely to travel this far just out of envy or the ambition to conquer the world. It is impossible that he would undertake such a long journey when the traditional neighbourhood enemy Tibet, though defeated for the moment, could rear his head any time. Yet, if Lalitaditya undertook this campaign, there ought to be some serious reasons. Unfortunately, there is no source available to tell us the exact reasons. We have tried to fix logically the most plausible reason.

In this backdrop, we can make a logical guess that Lalitaditya left for his campaign in 738 AD and reached Kanauj in 739 AD after conquering the intermediate regions. After the first battle, the full-scale war took place over the draft of the peace treaty.It ended decisively in 740 AD.

Lalitadityahad to conquer the regions from Himachal Pradesh to Antarved (region between Ganga and Yamuna) before reaching Kanauj. It means Lalitaditya must have left Kashmir in mid-738 AD. For his generals, this was a long period. Since they had to fight all along the way, it was natural that they were tired. Besides, the difference between the climates in Kashmir and Madhya Desha may have made them feel more tired.

So, we can deduce that the Lalitaditya-Yashovarmanwar started in 739 AD and ended in 740 AD with Yashovarman becoming a vassal king of Lalitaditya. This estimated year matches the other historical events, however foggy their records may be. Because of this, we can also match the histories of both these kings to a large extent.

War, peace and total annihilation of Yashovarman

We find some information about the war between the two stalwarts Lalitaditya and Yashovarman in *Rajatarangini*. Let us discuss it on that basis.

"At Gadhipura, where Vayudeva (wind god) had made the virgins hump-backed.At that very place, he (Lalitaditya) bent the backs of many great warriors.

"Like the bright sun that evaporates rivers in a moment, he dried up the river-like army of the mountain-like Yashovarman.

"The ruler of Kanyakubja was intelligent! He bowed before the great Lalitaditya." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 133-136)

In these three shlokas, Kalhana has described how Lalitaditya defeated and made Yashovarmanto bow. Yashovarman's army had a huge elephant forceas compared to just 300 elephants of Lalitaditya. According to some scholars, this must be the reason Lalitaditya took time to defeat Yashovarman. However, the elephants were never the strength of Lalitaditya. He had not much use of them in the mountain warfare. We need to note the difference between the mountainous terrain of Kashmir and the plains of Kanauj. Naturally, utility of elephants in Kashmir was limited or rather perfunctory. Instead, Lalitaditya had a strong cavalry and foot soldiers, which could both move about swiftly. We have already seen that he had benefitted from these in the wars with the Arabs.

Nevertheless, Yashovarman too had a strong and victorious army. He would have naturally offered a strong resistance to Lalitaditya. For this reason, the war between the two must have been fought very keenly.It must have certainly lasted for a long time; at least a few months.

Yet Lalitaditya defeated him. This was the pinnacle of success in Lalitaditya's career. When Yashovarman saw the situation getting out of his hands, he accepted the defeat. Kalhana says that when Yashovarman realised that he cannot win, he intelligently saved himself from a complete annihilation.

However, this was the first battle.The seeds of the immediate second battle were sowed in it.

Kalhana says –

"Just as the fragrance of sandalwood is stronger than that of the spring breeze, the ministers of the king (Lalitaditya) were more self-assured than him.

"Looking at the draft of the peace treaty written diplomatically by Yashovarman, minister of external affairs Mitrasharma felt offended.

"He did not like the name of Yashovarmanmentioned before that of Lalitaditya.

"Though the generals, tired as they were because of the long war, did not like his objection, the king himself liked the attention to the matter of propriety.

"Pleased with the minister. Lalitaditya awarded him five titles and uprooted Yashovarman." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 136-140)

We can imagine what must have happened, from this brief information. Though defeated and made to take a bow, Yashovarman's pride over the earlier victories had not diminished.Therefore, when he sent the draft of the treaty to Lalitaditya, he put his name first. Kalhana has not given the terms of the treaty but it surely was about the redistribution of the regions in the northwest, the amount of obeisance money and settlement of border disputes. In the end, however, the terms must have been dictated byLalitaditya because he was the victor.

Mitrasharma did not like the name of Yashovarman mentioned in the draft before that of Lalitaditya.He brought it to the notice of Lalitaditya, who liked the attention to the matter of propriety.Hence, Lalitadityadecided to goto war again. The peace treaty did not come into effect in the end. He made his generals fight the war even though they were tired and unwilling. The war ended with a complete rout of Yashovarman.

Here, it is said that Lalitaditya pushed Yashovarman into the war at the behest of a minister, by making an issue of a technical matter. This is unfair to Lalitaditya however. Though Yashovarman was strong at an earlier time, he had been defeated and had surrendered. In such a situation, the draft he prepared ought to have been as per the protocol. Yashovarman, on the contrary, put his name first in spite of his defeat to show that he was superior. It was wrong and not acceptable to any victorious king. There is no point in blaming Lalitaditya for doing that, in a partisan manner. Mitrasharma just did his job.We must note that the king appreciated this and promoted him. This shows Lalitaditya took due cognisance of good work and talent.

That Yashovarman was uprooted or annihilated in this second battle only means that he was no more a sovereign power and had become a vassal king of Lalitaditya. He merely remained a feudatory lord. He, who once had in his court people like Bhavabhuti and Vakpati, now himself had to praise and extol the virtues of Lalitaditya. The apparently small mistakeby him or his minister cost him dearly. There was no scope for a peace treaty now. With Yashovarman's defeat, the dispute about the ascendancy over the northwest India and its distribution withered away.

Moreover, the regions that Yashovarman had conquered or annexed earlier fell into Lalitaditya's hands automatically. Of course, he still needed to take the formal charge of them, and issue fresh agreements to them and for that had to go to Magadh, Gaud, Vanga and the other smaller states.

The mistake committed by Vakpati in Yashovarman's case was repeated by Kalhana in case of Lalitaditya by terming this campaign of Lalitaditya as *digvijaya*. The campaign was to prevent the vassal states of Yashovarman from declaring independence after Yashovarman's defeat and make them accept Lalitaditya's supremacy. He fulfilled this objective.

While returning to Kashmir, Lalitaditya also took with him the scholarsfromYashovarman's court and kingdom. Atrigupta from Antarved (the land between Ganga and Yamuna) was one such scholar. He was an expert in the shastras or sciences. Hearing about his reputation. Lalitaditya met him and brought him to Kashmir. Though no book in Atrigupta's name is found till date, he was certainly a multifaceted and famous scholar. Abhinavgupta, the crowning jewel of the Kashmiri Shaivism, was born in Atriguptas family a few generations later. Abhinavgupta has himself written this in his book *Tantraloka*.

After the war

Yashovarman's defeat came in 740 AD. He became an ordinary vassal. There is a mystery about him in the later years. According to one opinion, Lalitaditya took him along in his *digvijaya* campaign. This author believes when Lalitaditya went to the vassal states of Yashovarman later, he is highly likely to have taken Yashovarman, along with his army, with him becauseto parade the previous master as his vassal now would make it easier for himto get others to fall in line, without war. The Magadh, Gauda, Vanga and other states would naturally be intimidated by the fact that Lalitaditya was even more powerful than Yashovarman because he had defeated Yashovarman. This tactic seems to have worked. We can say that Magadh, Gauda, Vanga and Kalika in the south (River Kali of today?) accepted Lalitaditya's supremacy without war. The sequence of conquests given by Kalhana up to this point is also correct.

Lalitaditya had already won the regions in the 1,300-km long region between Kashmir and Kanauj. Therefore, the boundaries of Kashmir now extended from Tokharistan-Gilgit in north to Kalika (or Gwalior) in the south. As per Kalhana, "From the northern banks of Yamuna to river Kalika, the Kanyakubja country became the courtyard of his house for Lalitaditya. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 145).

Kalhana has recorded a few more victories of Lalitaditya. The victories so far are true to the history but the other victories are doubtful. Historians such as

Hermann Goetz believe all the victories given by Kalhana to be factual whereas scholars,including Tansen Sen, deem them fictional. It is essential to analyse them therefore.

Nevertheless, after defeating a powerful emperor like Yashovarman, Kashmir became the largest empire of contemporary India. This was the highest point in Lalitaditya's career. The victory added enormously to his power, knowledge and wealth. It inspired him to undertake more and newer charitable construction works. The foundation of the creation of Sunishchitpur town was also laid by it.

Yashovarman died sometime between 749 and 753 AD, as per the Jain sources. After his death, his son Ama came to the throne. The boundaries of Kanauj had shrunk then. According to the Jain sources, he too had to fight against the Magadh and Gauda kingdoms. This means Yashovarman was left with the original Kanauj kingdom, that too nominally, without any powers. He was in a pathetic situation. His son Ama, however, began to expand his kingdom again. This was the beginning of the efforts to free themselves from Kashmir's control. This beginning was made after 755 AD. Lalitaditya was far away in the north at the time. Even then, Yashovarman remained a vassal king till his death. The Jain sources maintain that he adopted Jainism towards his end. This is possible because he may have lost interest in worldly life out of his frustration resulting from his defeat and the insulting status as a vassal king.

In the estimated year of Yashovarman's death. Lalitaditya was on a different mission, fit for a great, ambitious emperor. Before discussing what it was,let us review and verify the information given by Kalhana about Lalitaditya's *digvijaya* in the next chapter.

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Chapter 8

Lalitaditya's *digvijaya*

Kalhana has given a very endearing description of Lalitaditya's*digvijaya* in his *Rajatarangini*. In fact, he surpasses Vakpati, who wrote *Gaudavaho* in terms of the use of similes and alliterations. Even while suffering from the style-related issues typical of puranic writers, one cannot deny the fact that he has prepared the base of history writing. While writing about Lalitaditya, at least on two occasions, he has pointed out the flaws of this great Kashmiri emperor quite candidly. While remaining impartial to a large extent, he has used the sources available to him,the folklore and beliefs he got to hear freely,in an ornate language.

Kalhana has recorded many heroic deeds of Lalitaditya.He has used the *digvijaya* style exaggerated writing in it, like *Gaudavaho*. According to Marc Stein, many of these victories mentioned by Kalhana are a product of his imagination with no historical evidence available to corroborate them.[1]In *Gaudavaho,* we have already seen the truth or otherwise of Yashovarman's victories. Vakpati, however, was avowedly a court poet living on the grace of Yashovarman. He wrote to appease his master and free himself from the captivity. Even if poetic, he could have been more objective in his writing being a contemporary of Yashovarman, but he didnot.

It is not the case with Kalhana. He has written Lalitaditya's history about 400 years after Lalitaditya's death based on the sources available to him then. Besides, the scope of *Rajatarangini* is quite expansive watching over about 5,000 years.Lalitaditya was but a dot on that expansive canvas. That had put certain limitations on him. The first limitation was the availability of reliable references after 400 years. Secondly, the public beliefs are bound to become foggy over such a long period, besides being distorted beyond recognition. Yet Kalhana has organised and presented the available information in his own style.

There are obviously some flaws in his presentation. For example, the Arab invasions;the strong resistance put up by Chandrapida to Lalitaditya, thereby preserving the independence of Kashmir. These were some of the most important and historically provable achievements that do not find even a passing mention in Kalhana's writing. Moreover, he is mum on the Kashmir-China relations also. He doesnot mention the Chinese travellers, who had visited Kashmir, such as Huen Tsang, Ou-K'ong and Korean traveller Hyecho.

In Maharashtra, the history of Chhatrapati ShivajiMaharaj is relatively recent, a little over 350 years old, but a complete clarityis lacking. We can imagine then how much clarity could exist about the history of Lalitaditya from the eighth

century 400 years later. Besides, the flaw in Kalhana's style is that he did not maintain the chronology of events.

He has given the tenure of the kings as per information available to himbut no exact dates as per any calendar are given. Also, we cannot rely on Kalhana about the tenures of the kings as well.Since we cannot rely on Kalhana for determining the period of each king belonging to the first historically provable dynasty of Kashmir (Karkotaka).One has to look for other sources. Even then, a difference of about a year or few months remains. Secondly, no clear mention of the exact time or sequence of the events during the tenure of each king is to be found. For this reason, we have to take help of logic and other sources that could support those events.

However, Kalhana is the basis of Lalitaditya's history. To understand Lalitaditya's life, we need to keep Kalhana's description central and then proceed according to the availability of other evidences. In this chapter, let us discuss Lalitaditya's *digvijaya*.

Kalhana begins the account of Lalitaditya thus –

"After that (after Tarapida), ShriLalitaditya became the sovereign king. He was superior to the fate, which creates parochial rulers.

"He bedecked the elephant-like Jambudwipaby the glory of his military exploits as someone should make his clothes fragrant with the fragrant powders." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 126-127)

Kalhana knows that he was now writing about the most powerful king in the Kashmir history. Even till Kalhana's time, i.e. 400 years later, stories, even if exaggerated, of the valour of the kings had remained in the public memory. The towns, temples and viharas built by Lalitaditya had kept the memories of his great career alive through their existence. Lalitaditya was great and superior to any other king because he expanded the Kashmiri Empire on either side of the Himalayas, in the subcontinent as well as far away in the north. This was certainly a matter of pride for the Kashmiris. This pride is reflected even in Kalhana's writing.

Then Kalhana immediately gets down to inform us about Lalitaditya's *digvijaya*. Here he has used the puranic style of narration akin to Vakpati. He paints a picture that Lalitaditya had travelled all over India for his *digvijaya*. In fact, one feels that he has even changed the sequence of events to suit his narration. Perhaps he knew about some victories but the information about some others hadnot reached him at all. In his traditional description of the *digvijaya*, he has inserted a few imaginary wars and victories. However, let us go by his information here.

Digvijaya **campaign**

Kalhana says,

"When he (Lalitaditya) launched his *digvijaya,* he abandoned his anger on seeing the opposite kings standing on the battlefield with their hands folded, in respect.

"When the thunderous noise of his war drums rent the air, people ran away leaving their homes and estates behind. Such towns looked like women having had an abortion

"At the time, the auspicious *bindi*s of the women of the enemy camp fell off, tears rolled down their cheeks. It appeared as though they were performing the last rites of their men." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, 4, 128-130).

Kalhana gives brief, poetic information about how Lalitaditya marched forward towards Kanauj, winning the kingdoms lined along the way. Lalitaditya had to naturally take over the kingdoms that fell in his way. These regions included today's Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and a part of Haryana. There were several small and big confederations or kingdoms in these areas, like Kangda, Kumaun, Lohara, Garhwal, etc. (The then Strirajya could have been made of Kumaun and Garhwal).

Kangda kingdom was earlier taken over by the Arabs but had become independent after the Arabs had gone away. Though there is not much historical information available about these kingdoms, these people were warriors. According to Kalhana, some of the rulers surrendered without fight. Those who fought were defeated by Lalitaditya.

This information given by Kalhana can be said to be historically true because to conquer Kanauj, he needed to establish his administrative control over the regions between Kashmir and Kanauj.These smaller powers couldnot have survived his large and strong army anyway.

Conquering these kingdoms, Lalitaditya turned east towards Antarved. During this journey, he possibly won the western parts of Yashovarman's empire as well. Antarved is also known as Antarved Doab, meaning the land between two rivers (Ganga and Yamuna). Aforementioned scholar Atrigupta lived here.He came in contact with Lalitaditya during this invasion before agreeing to go to Kashmir. Since Atrigupta was in the court of Yashovarman and yet lived in Doab, we can say that Yashovarman ruled over Antarved or at least parts of it.

Kalhana corroborates this when he says, "In this way, Kanyakubja kingdom from the north of Yamuna till river Kalika became the courtyard of his house for Lalitaditya." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 145). No historical information is available, as to which other rulers ruled over Antarved besides Yashovarman.Kalhana says that Lalitaditya subdued them as well and took obeisance monies from them. This means Lalitaditya conquered these regions easily, without having to fight any major war.

These being the silted plains, Lalitaditya's army, which had otherwise fought in the mountainous regions, must have found it easier to move quickly. The Kashmiri army was coming to this part for the first time. They must have enjoyed riding over this new, fertile flat land. The war between Lalitaditya and Yashovarman became inevitable because by destroying the latter's posts in Antarved, the former had effectively challenged his sovereignty.

After taking over Antarved Lalitaditya turned towards Kanauj. Kalhana doesnot tell us the exact place, where the war took place.However, Yashovarman doesnot appear to have resisted Lalitaditya till he took over Antarved. Lalitaditya had to cross Yamuna in order to reach Kanauj, so they must have fought near Kanauj.

According to Kalhana, "At Gadhipura, where Vayudeva (wind god) had made the virgins hump-backed, in that very place, he (Lalitaditya) bent the backs of many great warriors." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 133). This statement indicates that the two powerful emperors fought near Kanauj. Of course, we do not have any evidence to support the fact.

Since we have already discussed the war between Lalitaditya and Yashovarman in the previous chapter, let us not dwell on it again.Now, discuss the next campaign of Lalitaditya, as recorded by Kalhana.

East Sea–Kalinga victory

After defeating Yashovarman, Lalitaditya marched towards the eastern sea.

Kalhana says -

"Just as Ganga meets the east sea after crossing the Himalayas, Lalitaditya's army reached the east sea after crossing the hurdle of Yashovarman.

"When many Kalinga elephants in the army saw their motherland, their mahouts had to struggle keeping them on their path.

"Because of the friendship with the elephant that had become the seat of goddess Laxmi, all the elephants belonging to Gaud kingdom came and joined him.

"When the leading group reached the eastern seashore, it looked like because of their trunks, the waves of the sea are being drawn towards them." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 146-149)

Though there is confusion in the geographical sequence here, Kalhana suggests that Lalitaditya conquered Gaud, Vanga and the Kalinga kingdom as well. As discussed earlier, Yashovarman had conquered Magadh and Gaud previously.They were his vassal states. He had even killed the Gaud king Dharma. It is not clear, however, whether he had annexed this kingdom to his or had installed the heir to the earlier king there as his vassal.

Lalitaditya couldnot have reached Gaud (West Bengal) without crossing Magadh. Though Kalhana doesnot mention this kingdom here.He has given suggestive information ahead.

The possibility of Lalitaditya having to fight Magadh is less.Even if he did so, the war must have quickly ended in his favour. Kalhana gives the evidence of winning Magadh by Lalitaditya through a fantasy-filled story.

Lalitaditya had a Tukhari (Turk) by the name Chankuna in his service. He had two magical beads. One of them had the power to make way by splitting the water in the rivers and the other to restore them.

Once, when Lalitaditya faced a problem while crossing a river, he saw Chankuna using the power of the beads. Lalitaditya then asked Chankuna for the beads. Chankuna agreed to give them in exchange of something he wanted. When asked to name his desired object, he said, "Please give me the Bhagwan Sugatdev Buddha idol that you brought from Magadh on the elephant. You take these beads that help cross the earthly ocean and give me Sugat that helps cross the ocean of life."

Lalitaditya happily agreed and gave him the idol.

"Chankuna installed that brilliant, saffron coloured idol in his vihara. From the metal strips binding its base, we can see even today that it was carried over an elephant." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 248-263)

Chankuna was a historical person and the viharas constructed by him had been seen and noted down by the Chinese travellerOu-k'ong. Besides, the fact that the vihara and the Buddha idol in it existed during Kalhana's time can be seen from his words, "we can see even today". Although Kalhana believed that Chankuna was a Tokhari possessing mystical powers, which is not the case. Chankuna in reality was a skilful general. In fact, the name Chankuna is the Kashmiri form of the Chinese word meaning army general. The point to be noted here is that Lalitaditya had brought a Buddha idol from Magadh as a souvenir when he took that kingdom over.

The changed sequence of events in Kalhana's narration can be sorted. The correct sequence would be Magadh, Gaud, Vanga and Kalinga in that order.

After the Gupta Empire came to an end, the feudatory rulers in Gaud and Vanga had declared independence. Shashank was the influential king of Gaud,who ruled from Karnasuvarna (today's Rangamati, dist. Murshidabad). After Shashank brought Vanga under his control, Vanga's independent existence ended. Later, Shashank was defeated by Harsha but according to historian Shailendra Nath Sen, there is no credible evidence of the Shashank-Harshavardhan war.[2]This is an example of the confusion arising out of complete reliance on the ancient inscriptions in the Indian history because every dynasty has got convenient information inscribed.

Bengal's history is clouded after Shashank's death. However, till the rise of the Pal dynasty circa 750, anarchy ruled there. There was no stable and powerful ruler in Bengal till then. There is no information about the King Dharma as well, who according to the Jain sources, was killed by Yashovarman. In general, the local feudatory lords continued to fight among themselveslike big fish eating the smaller one. Even after Yashovarman conquered it, it is unlikely that the internal situation of Gaud had changed because Yashovarman had not established his administration in that place.

For this reason, Lalitaditya had to go to Gaud kingdom to take its formal control and to make it his vassal state officially. As per Kalhana's ornate description, the Gauds came under him without causing much trouble. This victory over Gaud may be a historical fact because Kalhana further describes the Gaud king thus –

"Even after Lalitaditya promised protection to the Gaud king in front of Parihaskeshav, he had the king killed through his spy named Teekshna at Trigami." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 323). When this incident took place. Lalitaditya was not present in his capital. This means that the new vassal king of Gaud was killed by Lalitaditya's spy sometime after the *digvijaya* campaign, when he was visiting Kashmir. Kalhana doesnot give the reasons behind this political murder but Lalitaditya wouldnot resort to such cowardly act, unless there was some serious reason. We shall discuss this later. It is notable here that Lalitaditya had certainly made the Gaud kingdom his vassal state.

From there,he is quite likely to have entered Vanga kingdom in the south. Though there is a doubt whether Yashovarman had conquered it previously, it is possible that due to the anarchic condition there, Lalitaditya took it over and recovered obeisance money from the local powers. He surely had to cross Vanga on his way to the south from Gaud kingdom. During this journey, he may have had to tackle the local powers forcing him to rout them. We can deduce that at least till this point, Kalhana's information is close to the facts.

Lalitaditya didnot go to Kalinga first as suggested by Kalhana.He began with Gaud, then crossed Vanga and finally entered Kalinga. This kingdom is well known since Emperor Ashoka and was a part of today's Odisha state. Its boundaries kept changing over the period.

Sporadic history of Kalinga is found in the 17 copper plates found in Odisha.[3]The Shilodbhav dynasty ruled this region. During Harsha's time, Shashank had conquered this part but it became independent again later. After nearly a century of a stable rule of the Shilodbhavs, during the Lalitaditya-Yashovarman era, in the eighth century, this kingdom was in disarray and the Shilodbhav dynasty had started weakening. Madhyamraja (III) was perhaps the last king of this dynasty. His cousin was Allaparaj. As Madhyamraja didnot produce an heir to the

throne, Allaparaj's son Tailapanibh was appointed the prince of the state, according to an inscription. No information is available, however, whether Tailapanibh actually ascended the throne. In fact, after Madhyamraja, the dynasty disappears from the pages of history. Later, sometime in the eighth century, this kingdom became a part of the Bhaumkara kingdom of Toshal in Kalinga itself. This information is found in an inscription dated 787 AD.[4]

The information available in the copper plates and inscriptions being unclear, the sequential and corroborated history of Kalinga is foggy. If Lalitaditya came here after 740 AD, at the time either the Shilodbhavs were already on a decline or maybe Lalitaditya caused it. An ambitious king like Lalitaditya wouldnot be able to resist the temptation to take over a decaying kingdom.

Therefore, after Gaud and Vanga, it is quite possible that he also annexed this region and as such Kalhana's information up to this point can be correct as well. However, this region doesnot appear to remain under his control for long. After 775 AD, the Bhaumkars became the rulers of Kalinga. The copper inscriptions indicate that about 15-20 years after Lalitaditya left, the nearby rulers began eating into this part of his kingdom.Ultimately, the Bhaumkar family took over entire Kalinga.

In short, though not supported by clear evidence, Lalitaditya's victory over Kalinga was probable and not entirely a poet's imagination on the part of Kalhana. We can surely guess as much.

Karnat campaign

After conquering lands till the eastern seashores in Kalinga, Lalitaditya turned his attention to the Karnat kingdom.

Kalhana says -

"When the king marched towards the south through the dense forests on the seashore, the stikes of his sword sent the enemies in his way also to the south (the direction of Yama, the god of Death).

"Citizens of Karnat maintaining long, matted hair abandoned their golden Ketaki leaf ornaments; sat at his feet and bore the dust of his feet on their headsinstead, due to his valour.

"At the time, the famous beautiful-eyed Queen Ratta ruled Karnat.

"Like Goddess Durga, she had overwhelmed everyone with her power and had removed all the thorns in her side in the Vindhyas.

"She was happy to see her reflection in Lalitaditya's toe-nail when she bowed before him.

"Resting under a palm tree and enjoying the coconut water in the cold breezes on the banks of Cauvery, the soldiers of Lalitaditya were refreshed."(Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 150-155)

Historians, however, believe that thedescription of Lalitaditya's campaign after Kalinga could be a work of fiction. There are reasons for that. Nonetheless, Hermann Goetz opines to the contrary.

Let's consider Goetz's opinion first.

According to him, Queen Ratta might be Bhavnaga, the wife of the Rashtrakuta king Indra (I). Bamzai tells us that Indra had abducted the Chalukya princess Bhavnaga from Khaira (Gujarat) and had married her.[5]After Indra's death, she may have been ruling the kingdom with her son Dantidurga in her lap. However, she faced a danger in the form of her brother-in-law Krishna. She, therefore,sought Lalitaditya's help. Accordingly, Lalitaditya went to the south and joined her side. Lalitaditya's vassal kings, Jivitgupta of Gaud and Yashovarman, also took part in this war. Bhavnaga being originally a Chalukya princess, when Lalitaditya went to help her, they probably made way for him through their kingdoms. After Lalitaditya returned from Karnat, Dantidurga may have cast his vassal status. [6]

Goetz has assumed Lalitaditya's victories over Gaud, Bengal and Odisha to have happened in 735-36 AD. Going by his opinion, the Karnat campaign must have happened in 736-37 AD. However, it is clear that his chronology is also not accurate. We have already seen that basically the Lalitaditya-Yashovarman war couldnot have taken place before 739-40 AD. Besides, Mishra doesnot accept that Yashovarman had taken part in any war as the vassal of Lalitaditya. According to him, neither *Gaudavaho* nor *Rajatarangini* suggest even remotely that Yashovarman undertook any campaign as a vassal, with Lalitaditya.[7]

According to Marc Stein, this is merely a traditional, poetic description of a *digvijaya,*in which many things are imaginary, except the victory over Yashovarman. [8]

Goetz,however,maintains that the Karnat campaign took place circa 737 AD.It is historically factual. Let us verify the facts by reviewing the situation of the Rashtrakutas in Karnataka at that time.

As per the available information, the Rashtrakutas of Manyakhet (a town near Gulbarga existing even today) were basically the vassals of the Chalukyas from Badami. Dantidurga (735 – 756 AD) refused the ascendancy of Chalukya king Kirtivarman (II) from Badami and founded the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Since he defeated the Chalukyas in 753 AD, the Rashtrakutasemerged to be a strong power in South India. The inscriptions at Verul (Ellora) inform us that Dantidurga then adopted appellations like Rajadhiraj and ParamMaheshwar. We also learn from the

inscription found at Samangarh, district Kolhapur that his mother was the Chalukya princess Bhavnaga from Gujarat.[9]

A careful scrutiny of the above information reveals that Kalhana may have meant Bhavnaga by Queen Ratta. Like many other dynasties, the history of the Rashtrakutas is also sketchy. It is incomprehensible that when Bhavnaga felt threatened by her brother-in-law Krishna, she should seek help of the faraway king. Lalitaditya, instead of the Chalukyas from Badami or her relatives in Gujarat. Even if one argues that Lalitaditya, who was on his *digvijaya* campaign, was at that time nearby Gulbarga (in Kalinga),so she thought of him for a quick help.Lalitaditya too agreed to help her.This information should have been given in any of Dantidurga's inscriptions. Secondly, Lalitaditya's invasion of Manyakhet could have been misinterpreted as an invasion by the Chalukyas of Badami.They would have stood up to him, of which there is no indication in the history even in passing.

As compared to the northeastern kingdoms, those in the south were more powerful and stable. Also, Kalhana says that Queen Ratta was ruling in Karnat, which is not true because she was a vassal of the Chalukyas. If her brother-in-law tried to usurp the kingdom after her husband's death, there is no question of her seeking Lalitaditya's help simply because the authority to decide the succession in a vassal state was entirely in the hands of the Chalukyas. On the contrary, Kalhana says that she was a sovereign queen and had influence up to the Vindhya ranges. This is also not a historical fact.

Therefore, the Karnat campaign of Lalitaditya is clouded in ambiguity.It may not have been so. It appears that in writing a traditional account of a *digvijaya*, Kalhana has cleverly used the factual Queen Ratta.

In short, Lalitaditya's victory over Karnat is not a historical fact.

Further South

Kalhana says thatLalitaditya marched further south after conquering Karnat. He has described Lalitaditya's southern *digvijaya* in his poetic and decorative language. He says -

"Resting under a palm tree and enjoying the coconut water in the cold breezes on the banks of Cauvery, the soldiers of Lalitaditya were refreshed."

"For the fear of the king, the black serpents slithering on the branches of the sandalwood trees appeared like swords drawn by the Chandan Mountain.

"As the small streams are crossed by stepping on the stones lying in their course, he crossed over the island by stepping on the smaller islands." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 155-157)

Lalitaditya entered Tamil Nadu by crossing the Malay mountain.Thereafter, he even went to Sri Lanka by sea, according to Kalhana.

If this was true, Lalitaditya would have had to defeat the Chalukyas first. According to the contemporary Tamil history,Pandya king Maravvarman Rajasingha and Chalukya king Kirtivarman had joined hands at the time. They were busy warring with Pallava King Nandivarman (731 to 765 AD). All these three kingdoms were powerful and have made a valuable contribution in creating the unique South Indian culture. Numerous inscriptions belonging to them have been found in this region. In fact, along with the written literature, the inscriptions also reveal the cultural and political history of the Pallavas, the Pandyas, the Gangs and the Chalukyas. None of these inscriptions or literature remotely indicates that a Kashmiri king ever visited the region, let alone invaded it. Therefore, it is a poetic imagination that Lalitadityacrossed this region and even went to Sri Lanka, defeating the strong local powers and traversing the land.

Saptakonkan conquest

After having crossed the sea once, Kalhana tells us, Lalitaditya conquered Saptakonkan region on his return journey. He says -

"To the celebratory sound of the waves of the ocean, this victorious king turned towards West.

"Like the brilliant sun conquering the seven islands with his seven horses, his glory engulfed the seven lands including Konkan.

"Seeing the town Dwaraka besieged by the roaring, tall windswept waves of the western ocean, his soldiers became eager to enter it.

"The mineral dust rising from the earth to sky with the advent of his forces looked like an enraged Vindhya mountain was all set to cross its limits."(Kalhana's Rajatarangini, 4, 157-161)

The narrow strip of land known as Konkan, on the western seashore had to its north the river Damanganga and to its south river Gangavali as its boundaries. Before the seventh century, the Konkan region was geographically divided into two parts Aparant or North Konkan and Gomant or South Konkan. In the seventh century, further subdivision led to it being called Saptakonkan. A name close to this name first appears on the copper plate of Chalukya king Vijayaditya in 705 AD. In this plate, Saptakonkan is referred to as 'Mahasaptame Iridage Vishaye', in which one of the parts is named as Iridage.[10]

Since the ancient times, the Konkan seashore had never been under any single ruler. Though the Shilahars ruled parts of North Konkan for a long time (810 to 1260 AD), they were the vassal state of the Rashtrakutas till the 10thcentury. No information is available about who ruled the region before them.[11]The local,

regional powers ruled in the rest of Konkan because a good amount of trade took place through its ports.For the tax collection, it was always beneficial to have the harbours under control.

Kalhana suggests that Dwaraka, known as the gateway to heaven, was also conquered by Lalitaditya. Dwaraka was an important sea port since ancient times. There is a story that the Dwaraka of the Mahabharata's times had drowned in the sea. Archaeologists are now trying to study it under the sea.They have found some archaeological relics indicating existence of a town or port at the place, which went under as the sea level rose. Some scholars believe that these relics can be of a port and not a residential town because the stone anchors found here can only be a part of a port city.[12]However, the political history of today's Dwaraka is nearly non-existent.

Since Lalitaditya's campaign in Saptakonkan is a myth produced by Kalhana, there is no possibility of his coming to this part ever. Therefore, the conquest of Saptakonkan or Lalitaditya's victory over the west could not be a historical fact and should be deemed as imaginary.

Towards the North

Kalhana tells us that after conquering Saptakonkan Lalitaditya's victorious army entered Ujjayini. He says -

"Later, while entering Ujjayini, the tusks of the elephants in his army began to break as if by the light of the moon sitting on the crown of Mahakal."(Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 162)

A devotee of Lord Shiva, Kalhana's poetic talent is certainly at its best here. In a couplet, he has demonstrated his excellent poetic talent. In fact, one is led to think that perhaps he 'invented' Lalitaditya's victory over Ujjayini for this sole purpose. Let us now discuss whether Lalitaditya had indeed invaded this town.

We learn from the Jain sources that Yashovarman's kingdom had extended till at least Gopalgiri (Gwalior) in the south. Around 500 kms south of Gwalior is the city of Ujjain. The Lat kingdom was in its vicinity. According to Georg Buehler, Lat was the region between the Mahi and the Kim rivers in Gujarat. According to Tejram Sharma, it was the region from river Mahi in the north to river Purna in the south.At one time, its boundaries extended up to Daman.[13]

After the fall of the Gupta Empire, from the sixth to the ninth century, the history of Ujjayini is lost. It is not possible to say who ruled Malwa in Madhya Pradesh in Lalitaditya's times. It appears to have fallen in the hands of the Rashtrakutas in the second half of the eighth century. When the White Hunas

destroyed the Gupta Empire, many small local feudatory lords had established their own kingdoms.But we do not know who ruled Ujjayini.

Though Kalhana mentioned Lalitaditya having conquered the Lat kingdom during his *digvijaya*, Lat king Kayya was a vassal of Yashovarman.Kalhana mentions in his description of the constructions during Lalitaditya's tenure that Kayya had built a temple and a vihara in Kashmir.

Kalhana says, "....and the vassal king of the Lat country, Kayya, built Kayyeshwara. He also built a wonderful vihara by the name Kayyavihara. An incarnation of Jina, a bhikkhu named Sarvadnyamitra lived in this vihara. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 209-210)

Considering the above information, it is possible that Lalitaditya had won the Lat kingdom. However, let us check the availability of information about Kayya.

According to Goetz, the person referred to as Kayya by Kalhana must be Kark (II). When Lalitaditya invaded this region, the Chalukyas had defeated the powerful Maitrakas of Vallabhi. Goetz also says that Kayya was feudatory chieftain of the Rashtrakutas.Such a person will not go to faraway Kashmir to build a temple and a vihara. However, he estimates that maybe Lalitaditya had taken him along. The historicity of Kark or Kakka is proved by the grant inscription from 757 AD. Goetz further says that Kark may have returned to his capital after Lalitaditya's death.[14]

Though Kark's historicity is proven, it is not known whether he was a vassal of any ruler. He could be a ruler who became independent after the fall of the Maitrakas. That Kayya is the corrupt form of Kark or Kakka is not impossible. After he was subdued by Lalitaditya, he may have undertaken construction of thetemple in Kashmir to please the new master. He didnot have to wait in Kashmir till Lalitaditya's death for that. He could have just paid for it sitting in his capital though he may have visited Kashmir off and on during the construction work. Kalhana informs about the temple-vihara built by him and also names its occupant.So, his information cannot be negated.

It is quite possible that Lalitaditya travelled from Gwalior to Ujjayini to the Lat kingdom. He may have turned to Gwalior from Kalinga to take it over as a former territory of Yashovarman. Though it is a moot point whether he went to Ujjayini from there as an invader or merely to visit the ancient temple of Lord Shiva there, the latter is more probable because he being a Shaivite, he may have been tempted to visit this famous temple.

From Ujjayini, he may have forced his way into Lat to capture that kingdom. Unless the opportunity came up or he had some reason to, Lalitaditya wouldnot have undertaken this campaign. Kayya (Kark) may have become his vassal due to his defeat in the war.However, he is unlikely to have gone to Kashmir with

Lalitaditya as Goetz suggests. As it is, since it was difficult for Lalitaditya to administer these distant regions directly sitting in Kashmir, he may have entrusted the administration of Lat to Kayya.

This means, we can possibly guess that Lalitaditya first came to Gwalior from Kalinga.Later, he reached Ujjayini with his army. He probably recovered obeisance money from the local ruler.Then he entered Lat,from there, he undertook the return journey. It may be noted here that this part of the campaign doesnot appear to be completely imaginary like the victories over Saptakonkan or South India.

Kalhana doesnot mention that Lalitaditya attacked Rajasthan on his way back. He mentions Marubhumi.He says, "In the sandy terrain, where mirages created an illusion of sea, the king's elephants looked like crocodiles." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 172).But we cannot guess which land he is referring to exactly. Besides, considering that Kalhana describes the *digvijaya* campaign in each direction, it is incomprehensible that while describing the northward journey, he would suddenly change the direction to describe the events in the west. He, therefore, probably refers to the Taklamakan desert in the Tarim valley in the north. Even if we assume that he means a region in Rajasthan, the Maitrak rulers of that region had been debilitated already due to the Arab invasion.They were in the process of recovery. Also, there is no indication whatsoever in the available sources aboutLalitaditya's invasion ofRajputana. At the most, he may have passed through it. He may have also collected obeisance money from there.But it doesnot seem possible that he made any ruler here his vassal.

All these victorious events must have taken place about a couple of years after the war with Yashovarman in 740 AD, i.e. around 741–742 AD. By then. Lalitaditya had been away from his capital for about 4-5 years.So, his army also wanted to return home fast. There was also the threat of renewed trouble in Tibet-Dardistan-Baltistanregion.So, Lalitaditya must have wanted to return to his capital as well.

Of course, Kalhana doesnot stop here. After Ujjayini, he starts describing the victories in the north. We shall now review them.

Northern *digvijaya*

It would be a rare story of *digvijaya* if it doesnot contain the victories in the north. Kalhana's story is no exception. In fact, Lalitaditya had conquered the northern regions close to Kashmir already.Kalhana goes by the tradition to describe them at the end. Though there is anachronism in it, we shall discuss them based on the available facts.

Kalhana writes -

"After he won victories in every other direction and subdued every king there, he entered the vast northern region.

"Like Indra, eager to clip the wings of the mountains, had fought a fierce battle with them, he had to fight at every step with the spirited kings in this region.

"He destroyed the stables of the Kamboj king in such a way that the darkness that prevailed there made them look like dark buffaloes.

"The frightened Tukkhars (Turks) abandoned their horses and took shelter in the mountains.Seeing the horse-faced Kinnar people there, they lost the hopes to get their horses back sometime.

"He felt like a true victor only after defeating King Mummuni thrice.Since defeating the enemy but once is only incidental to the valiant and (superficial) like the wood worms eating into the letters carved in the wood.

"Just as the anger on the face of natural yellow or red-faced monkeys is not visible, the naturally white faces of the Bhauttas (Tibetans) did not show their fear of Lalitaditya.

"Like the rising sun cannot bear the light of the herbs in the mountains and valleys, he didnot approve of the drinking of liquor by the Darads.

"Beautiful wind, acquiring the fragrance of musk deer and the saffron flowers was eager to serve his army like an intelligent servant to beautiful women." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 163-170)

Despite the shuffling of the events by Kalhana, the victories described by him are historically true. Kashmir's boundaries had extended till Jalandhar even before 724 AD. Lalitaditya had stopped the Arab invasion there itself.

Kamboj was the region from the south of Hindukush to Rajauri. Though its geographical boundaries changed constantly, we can safely say that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Swat valley regions means Kamboj kingdom. Since these people were well known for horse breeding, they were also called Ashwaks. Dardistan and Baltistan are to the north of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (or Pakhtunistan). Rajauri, Simhapura had been under Kashmir from the time of Durlabhvardhana,during whose time itself the Kashmiri rule had expanded up to Taxila in Gandhar. Later. Lalitaditya brought the remaining Gandhar up to the boundaries of Kabul under him.[15]

During the Arab invasions and after,Lalitaditya may have naturally and easily taken his boundaries up to the Khyber Pass. An ambitious emperor like him couldnot have let the regions abutting his boundaries remain independent. He must have annexed these regions by defeating the local Shahi rulers. It also doesnot seem possible that Lalitaditya left the western and northern parts of Taxila untouched. We can estimate that he had achieved these victories during 726 to 730 AD as the Arab invasions had made it necessary. Therefore, we can infer that his victory over Kamboj is a historical fact.

Tukkhar is Tokharistan. We have discussed in detail how Lalitaditya reached Tokharistan by taking over Kabul and Zabul while chasing the Arabs. The victory over Tokharistan is also a historical fact.

His victories over Baltistan and Gilgit (Major and Mino Palur or Bolur) while returning from Tokharistan are also historical facts accepted by scholars. At the same time, he had to fight Tibet to free the trade routes passing through Dardistan (Gilgit). He defeated them in Gilgit and also Ladakh, which was under their control before freeing up the Zoji La pass.Then he returned to his capital. Many historians express the possibility that he may have brought even Ladakh under his control at this time.

It seems till this point. Lalitaditya fought at least three wars with Tibet. There is no doubt that China being embroiled in its internal issues, Lalitaditya did a great job of keeping the strong and aggressive Tibet in check. It was a big thing at that time and Lalitaditya deserves to get credit for that.

Therefore, we can estimate that Lalitaditya's assaults in the northwestern and northern India took place during the period 726 to 733 AD in the order:the Arabs, Kamboj (in quick succession), Zabul, Kabul, Tokharistan, Baltistan, Gilgit and Tibet. All these campaigns have been successful and their historicity is proven by the sketchy but available sources.

Kalhana writes that Lalitaditya defeated King Mummuni thrice. Historians have debated a lot about the exact identity of this king without success.

According to Stein, Kalhana names Mummuni after the defeat of the Turks in Tokharistan. Therefore, he may be a chieftain of some Turkish tribe north of river Sindhu.The name Mummuni could be either his designation or his family name.[16]Some say Mummuni could be a fierce warrior and a small ruler belonging to some tribe from Kamboj or Dardistan in the hilly region. Since Lalitaditya had to fight with him three times, he may have been very brave or may have repeatedly gone back on his peace treaty with Lalitaditya. This information does not give us any concrete idea about his identity. Besides, geographically though, he appears to belong to the north or northwest, no scholar has made any firm statement about it.

From the available information, he may possibly be the ruler of the Jieshi kingdom (a kingdom in Kashgar, the Chitral mountain ranges). This state being supported by Tibet, he repeatedly troubled Kashmir on that strength. Based on the representation of the Tokharistani delegation as recorded in the Chinese Court in 749 AD, we can see that this kingdom had even made Tokharistan anxious.[17]Mummuni (the original pronunciation could be different) was the king of this place. Being next door to Kashmir, it is quite possible that Lalitaditya had to fight with him repeatedly because the tribes in this region backed by Tibet constantly troubled him. Moreover, Kalhana does not always put things chronologically. While describing the victories in the north, he suddenly begins to

describe the campaigns against the eastern states of Strirajya and Pragjyotishpur. However, we can deduce that the final decisive victory over Mummuni was achieved after 750 AD.It can be a historical fact.

Strirajya and Pragjyotishpur

After defeating the Darads of Dardistan, Kalhana says that Lalitaditya conquered Strirajya and Pragjyotishpur. He says -

"In the deserted town of Pragjyotishpur, he experienced the smoke of incense in the jungles, emanating from burning of the black aloe trees.

"In Strirajya, the women emasculated his army with their towering breasts instead of their elephants.

"When the queen of that kingdom came to him trembling, it was difficult to guess whether it was out of fear or desire."(Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 171, 173-174)

Both these victories of Lalitaditya have been dismissed by most of the scholars, including Marc Stein, as fictitious. In fact, Stein terms Strirajya as a fantastic land from the fairytales.[18]Let us still discuss Kalhana's description seriously.

Pragjyotishpur was the capital of the ancient and famous Kamarup kingdom in today's Assam. Pragjyotishpuris today's Guwahati. When Huen Tsang came to India, Bhaskarvarman was ruling this kingdom. Huen Tsang had visited Pragjyotishpurand had enjoyed his hospitality. *Harshacharita* also mentions Pragjyotishpur. The Varman dynasty ended with the death of Bhaskarvarman in 650 AD as he had no son. Thereafter, the Salastambh dynasty took charge of Kamarup. This dynasty is also known as the Mlechcha family because Salastambh used to identify himself as the descendent of Narakasura. This family belonged to the local tribes.It seems it was called so as per the then custom of calling all the people, who followed the pre-Vedic traditional faiths as Shudras or Mlechchas.

The family ruled Kamarup without opposition till the ninth century. During Lalitaditya's time, Harshvarman (725-745 AD) and later probably his son Balavarman (II) ruled this kingdom. A copper plate found here informs us about the family.[19]

Lalitaditya is believed to have turned toward Pragjyotishpur after conquering Gaud and Vanga as it was adjacent. However, that is not true. There was certain attraction in the mainland about Kamarup.It is found in the epics and plays. Though Kalhana has included Kamarup to make Lalitaditya's *digvijaya* look complete, Lalitaditya is not likely to have gone to Assam. We have to, therefore, deem this part of his *digvijaya* as Kalhana's imagination or a mere public belief.

Terming the concept of Strirajya(a queendom) as imaginary,hence the victory over it a fiction, the scholars dismiss it, though that is not true. There were many such lands all over the world, including those in Indian subcontinent. Therefore, we cannot dismiss them summarily.

Huen Tsang visited India in the seventh century.He has written in his travelogue -

"North of the Brahmapura country in the snow-capped mountains, there is a kingdom named Suvarnagotri. It got its name because of the high quality gold it produced. This is a queendom in the east.It is ruled by women hereditarily. Though the husband of the queen of this land is the king by designation, he doesnot have any powers in the administration."

Suvarnagotri is today's Garhwal-Kumaun region. Importantly, gathering gold particles from the riverbed sand was a major source of revenue for the Panwar kings of Garhwal. That is why it was called Suvarnagotri.[20] Hence, Huen Tsang's information must be factual.

Matriarchy is ancient not just in India but even elsewhere.It was destroyed in the current of the patriarchal culture later. Yet, traces of it are seen even today in southern parts of India. In the Nuwang tribe of Tibet, the queen had all the powers and was called 'Pinchin'. Huen Tsang mentions another queendom called Lankara, which was matriarchal, which was in today's Balochistan.[21] There are sporadic references to another queendom in the north. Some communities north of Himalayas practiced polyandry.History shows that this custom existed in Ladakh till quite recently.

While on his campaign against Yashovarman, Lalitaditya had conquered several lands in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The Garhwal-Kumaun region belongs to this area. Brahmapura was perhaps the southern part of Garhwal-Kumaun region. This part had patriarchy. The Strirajya was probably in the remote northern parts, close to the Tibetan boundary.It may have had matriarchal system till the eighth century. The Panwars came to power here in 823 AD but they didnot rule all of it. There were several smaller states here and Strirajya could be one of them. Lalitaditya had won all of them, probably along with the Strirajya, on his way to Kanauj.

Besides, we can say with certainty that Strirajya is not an imaginary concept.It finds a frequent mention in the Indian literature,besides the writings of the foreign travellers.

Uttarkuru

Uttarkuru has attained a prominent place in the mythology since Mahabharata. Informing us that this was the final frontier of Lalitaditya in his *digvijaya* before he returned to his capital Kalhana says -

"Just as the serpents take shelter in the earth holes for the fear of the eagle, the kings of North Kuru hid in the trees when Lalitaditya came.

"Like the lion returns to his den with his paws filled with the pearls torn from the elephant, he returned to his country with the wealth acquired through his victories." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 175-176)

The Kuru family ruled the northern India during the Mahabharata era. This home of the Kuru community was around Hastinapur in today's Haryana. It is suggested that Uttarkuru was perhaps the original land of the Kurus beyond the Himalayas. Mahabharata has a story that Kuru warrior Bhishmacharya abducts Amba, Ambika and Ambalika for his step brother Vichitraveerya. Since a similar custom exists in Kirgyzstan, some scholars suggest that Uttarkuru means Kirgyzstan.

The aggressive Aryans or some people from the Kuru community, who had migrated to India from the regions beyond the Himalayas in ancient times, may have kept the original Kuru land alive through myths and epics.They created a mystical aura around it to preserve its memories. The Mahabharata especially has glorified Uttarkuru a lot.Since the Great War took place within the Kuru family, it is not unnatural that the original place of its protagonists appears often in the epic. For the creator of Mahabharata, this is a holy land, where the warriors, who die on the battlefield, live afterwards. This land permits the rishis to romance and sex is open. The Adiparva of Mahabharata tells us that the Kuru family is connected with Uttarkuru. At the time of Yudhishthira's Rajasuya yagya, kings from Uttarkuru also had brought gifts.Arjuna had travelled to this land north of Himalayas as per the Mahabharata.

Even the *Aittareya Brahman* mentions Uttarkuru. It states that there is a confederation called Uttarkurunorth of the Himalayan range. (*Aittareya Brahman* 8, 14). The *Bhagwat Purana* divides the land as the Uttarkuru(North) and Dakshinkuru (South). Several other puranas too mention Uttarkuruin some way or the other.

The reference of Uttarkuru,being to the north of Kamboj, Shaka and Parad regions are found in the Ramayana as well. In fact, for the Indian writers, land beyond Himalayas or Hindukush was the northern end of the world. Since they didnot have the geographical knowledge of that land, it is not surprising if they thought it to be mysterious and wonderful.

However, we are not interested in the myths about Uttarkuruhere. There is a consensus that Uttarkuruis the land beyond Himalayas or Hindukush. There is the Tarim Valley north of the Himalayas.As per the descriptions given by Kalhana

elsewhere in *Rajatarangini*, this was the final campaign of Lalitaditya. By using the traditional term Uttarkuru,Kalhana probably refers to the Tarim Valley. However, this campaign did not prove victoriousfor Lalitaditya. He died mysteriously away from his empire. However, Kalhana maintains that he returned to his kingdom after the Uttarkuru campaign. Since Kalhana disregarded the chronology, several discrepancies are found in this description of the *digvijaya* campaign.This could be one of them. He has tried to write a story matching the traditional story of *digvijaya* disregarding the chronology in the process.

However, Uttarkuruwas not a mythical region for sure. It may have been made so due to the lack of information or its memories had become foggy over the period and due to its exaggerated wonderful nature. Yet, since it is a historical fact that Lalitaditya did his final campaign north of the Himalayas, we cannot dismiss Kalhana's story altogether. We need to note, however, that he had undertaken this campaign much later after establishing his control over Kanauj and other regions and in his old age.

We have reviewed the possible facts and fiction in Lalitaditya's *digvijaya* campaign based on Kalhana's story so far. Omitting the fictitious parts from it, we can say that regions from Tokharistan to Gaud and Vanga, including some parts of the central India, were under his control.

From this point of view, if we look at the geographical expanse of Lalitaditya's empire, it proves that he was the emperor of the largest contemporary India. Since he did not rule this extended empire for long and he did not have any inscriptions made (or if he had, they havenot come to light yet), history is silent about him. However, his achievements in India and outside are astonishing. Driving out the Arabs from India and keeping the then powerful Tibet in check are his great achievements! Considering his success during the turbulent times in the world's political history, there can be no objection to call him the second great emperor after Ashoka!

Calling the Lalitaditya Era in Kashmir's history a Golden Era in every respect will not be an exaggeration at all.

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Chapter9

Lalitaditya's extraordinary achievements

Having defeated Yashovarman, Lalitaditya got Kanauj, along with the regions won by Yashovarman previously. He took control of the many smaller states between Kashmir and Kanauj. Besides, he also conquered Gwalior to the south of Kanauj and the Lat kingdom on the west. Hence,his rule was established in regions from Tokharistan in the east to Gaud and Vanga in the west, including some parts of the central India. From this point of view, if we look at it, his was the second great empire after that of Emperor Ashoka.

After achieving victories in the south, he returned to his capital around 744 AD. Kalhana tells us that while returning, he bestowed royal prestige on his supporters by giving them kingdoms like Jalandhar, Lohara, etc (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 177). This only means that he appointed his friends/supporters and some of the original kings to the thrones of some of the kingdoms he won by making them his vassals.Instead of imposing his own administration on them, he ruled the kingdoms through them. In the prevailing conditions, it was an appropriate action. It would have been administratively difficult for him to control the plains directly from Kashmir, surrounded by the Himalayan mountain ranges. It was easier to make the defeated kings his vassals and administer through them. Lalitaditya appears to have chosen this path.

Lohara and Jalandhar were parts of Kashmir already. Since their rulers had taken part in the *digvijaya* campaign they had to be compensated some way. So, by increasing their powers, he fulfilled that obligation as well.

Even then, Lalitaditya had to devise the administrative machinery that would keep control over the vassal kings, including Yashovarman. He did it by creating various new posts and increasing the jurisdiction of his officers and ministers. We can say that his rule over this vast area continued for many years in his lifetime.

Kalhana tells us that he also imposed some restrictions on the citizens of the kingdoms he had conquered. In his exaggerated style he says –

"That victorious king made the defeated kings wear certain emblems showing their status as defeated kings, which they continue to wear even today.

"To the Turks, he made them shave only half of their heads, which they continue to do even today.

"To prove the lower status as animals of the southerners, he made them leave one end of their loin cloths long enough to touch the ground behind them." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 178-180)

These statements of Kalhana are exaggerated and speculative. This does not mean that Lalitaditya didnot humiliate the defeated kings.But the part about

restrictions on the citizens is patently exaggerated. Besides, the information given by Kalhana about the humiliation of the south Indians appears to have come from the folk belief because we have seen that Lalitaditya's victory over South India itself is fictitious.

Continuing his overstatement Kalhana says next –

"There's no city, village, river, ocean or island in the world, where this king did not build a temple.

"That proud king named those temples after a ritual or after a related event."(Kalhana's Rajatarangini 4, 181-182)

Even granting some amount of overstatement when praising the greatest emperor in Kashmir's history, it seems unlikely that Lalitaditya built temples outside of Kashmir. He didnot have time for that as well. At the most, he may have renamed some temples but these names may have been forgotten later.

He remained out of Kashmir for this campaign on the plains from 738 to 744 AD. He must have taken appropriate care to ensure that the administration back home would function smoothly in his absence.

Some scholars believe that the victories described by Kalhana to be from the period 733 to 735/36 AD, but this opinion doesnot stand against the historical evidence. In reality. Lalitaditya would have turned towards the southafter his victorious conflict with Tibet in 736/737. It wasnot possible for him to undertake that campaign before that because he was busy on the northwestern frontier. He could find time to settle his dispute with Yashovarman through war, only after he was free from there, i.e. after defeating Tibet the second time. He could win new regions after subduing Kanauj and establishing his ascendancy over its vassal kings.

The fact is, ever since he came to power in 724/25 AD, he was constantly fighting wars.He couldnot stay in his kingdom for long. Yet, he had begun many massive construction works in 733 AD itself. Martand Mandir and Parihaspur were two of them. He could have lived in his new capital only after 744 AD because the construction of this huge town must have taken a lot of time after it started around 733 AD.In the meantime, he wasnot in Kashmir. Construction of another town called Lalitapur also began in his absence.But it seems he wasnot happy about it. We shall discuss this later.

We can only imagine the kind of reception the Kashmiris must have given him when he returned after achieving so great victories in the south. This was the first time, the Kashmiri rule had extended beyond the valley, that too by defeating a powerful king of that time, Yashovarman. It must have boosted the Kashmiri pride.

Actually, there were many misconceptions about the Kashmiri people. For example, ML Kapoor says that *Rajatarangini* itself shows that most Kashmiris

(being used to live in cold climate) were lacking in physical capacity.Hence, they were unwilling to go to hotter climates and eating food in those regions. As such, they used to be in a hurry to return home.[1]

Also, some scholars opine that the Kashmiris are timid and somewhat cowardly. Therefore, they lacked the ability to win longer wars. Kapoor also says that it is difficult to believe Lalitaditya could have won so consistently in such an extended campaign with such an army.Moreover, in doubting Lalitaditya's campaign, Kapoor also says that Lalitaditya couldnot have afforded to stay away from his capital for so long.

These doubts are baseless and are an attempt to undermine the military power of Kashmir.

This is because Lalitaditya had retrained his army with the help of a Turkish general such as Chankuna. He had spent the time between 733 and 736 in precisely doing that. It is obvious that without building a strong and salaried army through retraining and restructuring, he couldnot have achieved all these victories.

Besides, he didnot have only Kashmiris in his army. He had the Pakhtuns, the Turks and even the Punjabis from the plains as well, in it. When Kalhana says, 'He bestowed the kingdom on his supporter,' we need to understand it well. Unless the ruler of Jalandhar had joined his campaign, along with his army, and participated wholeheartedly in the wars on the plains, Lalitaditya wouldnot have been so generous towards him.

The same can be said about Poonch (Lohara).

In short, Lalitaditya's army consisted of people from the warrior mountain tribes as well as those experienced in the flat land wars in Punjab. He could achieve his memorable victories because of this mix. Besides, victory or defeat depends also on who is leading the army. Lalitaditya was himself a great general, a fact proven by his victories over the Arabs and the Tibetans. Also, Kalhana himself gives the proof that he had the rulers of the plains, such as Kanauj, Gaud, Lat, etc under his wings, which is not disputed by anyone

Secondly, Kalhana also notes that Lalitaditya had spent most of his time away from the state.There is no reason to disbelieve that. We need to also note that Lalitaditya's end too came not in Kashmir but faraway in the north.

Lalitaditya could stay out of the capital for so long because of the administrative system he had created for the smooth functioning of the affairs of his state even in his absence. Kapoor agrees that Lalitaditya had brought fundamental changes in his central administration.He had created five new high administrative positions. He had appointed the loyal and diplomatic ministerssuch as Mitrasharma to the position of Chief Minister (Amatya). Because of the novel system from top to bottom, the king's presence was not needed.

Having accepted his administrativechanges, the question how he could afford to remain out of the capital is meaningless. On the contrary, one needs to appreciate Lalitaditya for the great administrativesystem. We can say that Lalitaditya created a decentralised administrativesystem. One can even imagine that his wives must have been handling some responsibilities of the state.

Also, Lalitaditya was not out of the capital continuously between 725 and 730 AD. We need to note that the wars with the Arabs werenot contiguous. Initial wars were limited to repel the Arabs whenever they came to the boundaries in Punjab. At the same time, he had to fend off the activities of Gilgit and Tibet as well.He also had to take care that there was no trouble on the western front (Swat-Gandhar-Pakhtun).

However, from 730 to 733 AD, he remained outside the capital for a substantial period in his chase of the Arabs. Later, he was out during 738 to 744 AD. In between, though he was fighting with Tibet and Gilgit-Baltistan frequently, he was in Kashmir most of the time. Though the period he spent outside was less, it is enough for a skilled diplomat. There are many proofs of his alertness all around.We shall discuss them in this chapter.

War with Tibet again

When Lalitaditya returned to his capital after a long time, it seems he had to pay attention to the northern front immediately. Since the Gilgit-Baltistan region was home to the mountain tribes, their nuisance value was very high. It wasnot easy to control them permanently. Moreover, the Tibetan expansionism was refusing to abate even after failing on the Gilgit-Baltistan fronts consistently. True, even after giving their princess in marriage to the king of Gilgit, Tibet had not been able to establish its control over it.The region constantly remained unstable.

Perhaps in Lalitaditya's absence, Tibet had begun to needle again. Lalitaditya's vassals in Gilgit-Baltistan had apparently begun to join hands with Tibet taking the opportunity of Lalitaditya's absence. Though China had recovered from its internal strife in the meantime, it had avoided to be aggressive and to send its army in this region.

After 744 AD, however, China adopted an aggressive policy.It started its attempt to bring the Jieshi kingdom in the Chitral range, which had the support of Gilgit and Tibet, under its control. China's objective was to put an end to Tibet's nuisance once and for all. Perhaps keeping this kingdom in the remote mountains under check had become a headache for Lalitaditya as well. But initially, he too took a stance of not helping the Chinese forces in any way.

In fact, keeping the trade routes passing through Baltistan and Gilgit safe and ensure safe passage for the traders was the need of China and Kashmir. Tibet

wanted to turn the trade directed to China towards itself.That was the cause of this power struggle. Yet, even after alerted by Lalitaditya in 733 AD, China had not made any move. Even then. Lalitaditya not only freed the trade routes, he also retained the region and the routes under his control by confronting with Tibet for a long time.

Moreover, the Sino-Tibet conflict had been renewed since 740 AD. When China woke up in 744 AD, though Lalitaditya did not help the Chinese military campaigns, he didnot oppose them either. To protect the trade routes and prevent Tibetan ascendancy over them being the sole objective, one can say that Lalitaditya chose to ignore the Chinese aggression against Tibet with his financial interests in mind, by allowing China to get rid of Tibet without his help.

Nevertheless, China's attempts to gain supremacy in this region failed miserably. Perhaps it realised that it could not win here without the help of Kashmir. On the other hand, even Tibet could not achieve total control over the region.China failed in its three attempts. We can see that perhaps Lalitaditya kept his patience in this period even though he faced nuisance.

The power struggle in this region continued in Lalitaditya's absence because Gilgit's ruler was now the son-in-law of Tibet.Taking advantage of that, Tibet grew even more aggressive. Already incensed by the failures of its army, in 747 AD, China sent its general Kao Hienchi of Korean origin to Gilgit again. This time, however, it showed the sense of seeking Kashmir's help. Lalitaditya too responded and sent his army from the south.

There was a large bridge on the Sei River passing through the Bunjiprovince.Tibet had always used it to send its army to help Gilgit and defy China. In that sense, the bridge was strategically very important. However, since the Kashmiri army advancing from the south destroyed the bridge, this time Tibet couldnot send its army.Gilgit was left to defend itself alone. At the same time, Kao Hienchi's forces entered Gilgit from the other side and succeeded in dethroning its pro-Tibet king.

In a way, this was a joint military operation against Gilgit, which was troublesome and had joined hands with Tibet. Both, China and Kashmir succeeded in it.But China did not implement the diplomatically smart suggestion given by Lalitaditya long ago even this time. He had asked them to keep a large army permanently in the region and had promised them the supplies as well. It is incomprehensible as to why China ignored this strategic advice.

The military importance of Lalitaditya's suggestion is found in the records of the Chinese Court. Tokharistan had understood the significance of it. As the nuisance of Kashgar increased, the envoy of Tokharistan went to the Tang court in 749 AD to seek their help. The entry of that time is important in this respect.

In his representation, the envoy had said that the Palur Minor (Gilgit) region has less fertile land and more population.Therefore, the Chinese army had to depend on Kashmir in terms of ration supply. The Jieshi kingdom lying between Kashmir and Gilgit creates obstacles in the transport of the supplies, at the behest of Tibet.

The Tokharian envoy further requested China that they should join hands with Kashmir again and send its army against Kashgar. Kashmir respects China and has a strong cavalry and army. China should also send valuable gifts to the Kashmiri king so as to secure his help against Kashgar and to convince him for this campaign. The Chinese court accepted this request.Accordingly, in 750 AD, China sent its forces under Kao Hienchi. He defeated Kashgar, held Botemo, its king, captive and installed his elder brother Suojiya in his place.[2]It is obvious that Lalitaditya took part even in this campaign because the records of the Chinese court suggest as much.

This representation makes it clear that Kashmir wasnot ready to help China unconditionally now. It knew China would not succeed in this region without its help.So, to make China bend, Lalitaditya didnot act even though Kashgar was troubling his vassal state Tokharistan.He arranged to let China know his strength through the envoy of Tokharistan. There may have been some political reasons behind this.

Kashgar was, in fact, a vassal state of China.But now, the equations had changed. Kashgar had become ambitious and had started acting independently.China's internal situation was responsible for this. Lalitaditya may have thought that China should be proactive in making its rebel vassal fall in line.

Kashgar state is a part of the Xinjiang province of China to the north of Himalayas. Maybe, its proximity let Tokharistan to feel threatened by it.Hence, it was prompted to send its envoy to China. The envoy didnot forget to ask China to involve Lalitaditya in this campaign by letting it know Lalitaditya's military strength, his ability to provide supplies. Looking at the way the envoy put down China openly, Lalitaditya himself may have instigated the visit of the Tokhari delegation to China. The envoy told China how it is essential to please Lalitaditya.China ultimately accepted his suggestion.

The Tokhari envoy must have visited Lalitaditya's court as well, along with the Chinese court. Also, having accepted Tokharistan's request, China must have obviously sent gifts to Lalitaditya and requested him to take part in the Kashgar campaign.The records of its court tell us that the suggestion by the Tokhari envoy was accepted. Unfortunately, no records of Lalitaditya's court are available.From whatever information that is available, we get the glimpse of Lalitaditya's diplomacy.

Here we learn that Lalitaditya joined hands with China this time.He not only established his supremacy over Gilgit and Jieshi again, but also undertook a military campaign to faraway Kashgar. We have already estimated that Mummuni, mentioned by Kalhana, could be the king of Jieshi. According to Kalhana. Lalitaditya defeated him thrice.There is room to think that the final victory was achieved this time.

Just as Tibet continued to attack China despite being repeatedly defeated by Kashmir, there is no record that it attacked Kashmir ever. In fact, though Kashmir had captured Ladakh that was Tibet's territory that time, Tibet never attacked Kashmir fearing its strong army. Tibet always focused on Gilgit and Baltistan.But we see that Lalitaditya controlled that region and put Tibet in check initially on his own, later with the help of China.

Lalitaditya had to constantly be at war because of the then unstable political situation.Asiahad become politically unstable due to the expansionist attitude of the Arabs and Tibet.There was a lot of upheaval among the local kingdoms. Lalitaditya's diplomacy at such time is significant. Instead of establishing a direct rule on the conquered regions and enslaving them, he seems to have preferred to maintain his ascendancy while allowing the vassals to function independently. Thus, he preserved the interests of his people and his economy. This policy proved to be beneficial for Kashmir. It became economically strong. Its strong military readiness kept pressure on Tibet.At the same time, though China was weak, Kashmir maintained good diplomatic relations with it looking at its market.

He had strategically avoided helping Chinese General Kao Hienchi against Gilgit initially. Hienchi failed thrice. Lalitaditya got involved only after China bent before him seeking his help.Then, in the joint war, they achieved victory. That helped change the power in Gilgit also. It showed who ruled the roost in the Himalayas.

Even in the campaign against Kashgar, China felt compelled to seek Lalitaditya's help. They had to send gifts to him to convince him to help them.

Creative works

The greatness of a king or an emperor isnot defined by the number of his victories or the expanse of his kingdom. His greatness is defined by how many and which creative works he undertook for his subjects. Lalitaditya was valiant, diplomatic and intelligent.However, the creative works that were done during his reign are unmatched in the history of Kashmir. The edifices he built then overwhelm the viewer even today. Just as the mention of Kashmir reminds one of its heavenly natural beauty, it reminds of the remnants of the great edifices there, which have withstood the ravages of time and the natural calamities.

Along with Lalitaditya, his three wives, his chief minister and his ministers,did many charitable constructions as per their capabilities. This means he elevated his officers and ministers to the heights of riches. Often the creative works completed by servants become the objects of envy of the royalty.But that was not the case with Lalitaditya. Also, we can see from various buildings and temples built during his tenure that religious tolerance prevailed. We shall now review the construction works during his tenure.

Parihaspur

Lalitaditya began the construction of Parihaspur, a new capital, after 733 AD. Earlier, he was on the Kabul, Zabul, Tokharistan and Tibet campaign. He brought back enormous wealth from this campaign. However, he avoided naming the new capital after him.

Today, the town, Parihaspur is full of ruins of massive, carved stones. For this reason, it is known as the Kani Shaher or a city of stones. The ruins are so massive that they are intimidating. We cannot even imagine how mammoth they would be in their original form.

Around26 kms from Srinagar, Parihaspur is now a part of Baramulla district. Several excavations have been done by the archaeologists here, which help get an idea of its original form.

Lalitaditya had built a huge palace here.We can imagine from its ruins how mammoth it could have been.

He had also built four temples in this town.The chief among them was the Parihaskeshav Temple. He had installed a silver idol of Parihaskeshav. As per Kalhana, in another temple of Muktakeshav, there was anidol made of 84 kgs of gold. Two more temples he built were the Mahavarah temple and the Govardhandev temple. Ruins of the Govardhandev temple can be seen even today.We can imagine from its ruins how huge it could be.

(The ruins of the Govardhandev temple)

Lalitaditya's religious liberalism can be understood from the construction of a huge chaitya, in which he had installed a tall, huge idol of Bhagwan Buddha.One can see the ruins of the chaitya and the temples even today. According to Goetz, the Buddha idol was made in the style of the Buddha statues inBamiyan.

Besides, he had erected a 54arm lengths tall Garuda Pillar in this new capital town. Since the king undertook so many huge and extraordinary construction works, his relatives, vassal kings and the ministers too contributed in the beauty of the town by their own constructions. His favourite wife Kamalavati constructed a marketplace by the name Kamalahaat for the convenience of the people and installed a silver idol of Kamalakeshav there.

Having become the chief minister now, Mitrasharma constructed the Mitreshwar Shiv Temple. Lalitaditya's vassal king of the Lat kingdom, Kayya (original name Kark or Kakka) built the Kayyeshwar Shiv temple. Moreover, Kayya went on to build a vihara named Kayyavihara, where a bhikkhu named Sarvadnyamitra, who was known to be a great scholar, lived.

Chankuna, the Turkish army general of Lalitaditya, who had come with the king from Tokharistan, built Chankunvihara as well as a stupa. Chinese traveller Ou-k'ong has given the description of this vihara. Kong had come to India in the last few years of Lalitaditya, i.e. in 759 AD.He had spent four years in Kashmir. His writings have proven that Chankunvihara existed.

Lalitaditya's Turkish wife Ishan Devi had built a huge drinking water reservoir in Parihaspur. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 194-212)

From the foundations of the constructions in this town, one imagines that the town was inhabited by officials, ministers and the royal servants rather than ordinary people. The town, with huge and rich constructions that added to its beauty fell prey to neglect, plundering and manmade disasters after Lalitaditya.

Lalitaditya's son Vajraditya plundered the charity funds created by his father for the temples and stupas. Perhaps he also relocated the capital. Sometime later,the Sindh stream that merged with Jhelum River near Parihaspur, was redirected to Sangam Shadipur. This deprived Parihaspur its natural water source. Then it faced water shortages, people began to relocate from there.

Thereafter, King Shankarvarman (883-901 AD) used the carved stones of the houses and temples in Parihaspur to construct a new town at Pattan. Parihaspur was already deserted.Later, it was destroyed. King Harsha (1089-1101 AD) took the gold and silver idols in the temples of Parihaspur and melted them. In the infighting later on, the town was also burnt down.[3]

The ill fate of this town built by Lalitaditya the Great was so strong that it lay there forgotten over the period. The credit to bring this forgotten town to light goes to the most credible translator of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and archaeologist, Sir Marc Aurel Stein. Using the information provided in *Rajatarangini*,he found the ruins of this town in 1892. The then Dogra king had started using the ruins for other constructions.However, Stein took great efforts to explain their historical importanceand prevented further loss. During 1888-1905, Stein visited Kashmir multiple times and found the locations of various towns and edifices mentioned in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. Had he not done the great work of locating the edifices built by the Karkotaka dynasty, we wouldnot have been able to see even these ruins today.

During the Karkotakaera, not just the Kashmiri architecture but also its sculpture had attained great heights.It was Lalitaditya who crowned it without doubt. [4]

Whatever is remaining today is enough to give an idea of the original glory. The foundations of the viharas,the palace and the remnants of the temples are a testimony to the old grandeur and glory.

Martand Mandir

Martand Mandir in the Anantnag district is a sun temple.It is the crowning glory of Kashmir's beauty. Lalitaditya undertook its construction immediately after his return from Tokharistan. Even as a ruin, its enormity is beyond the scope of an ordinary human eye. It is regarded as the evidence of the greatness of Kashmiri architecture vis-a-vis Greek architecture. This is a unique example of Kashmiri architecture.It has become an identity of Kashmir.

The Karkotaka dynasty belonged to a snake-worshipping community. Kashmiri snake-worshippers regard the sun as their original ancestor. This new form of sun worship could have been a legacy from consociation with the Magi people of ancient Iran or during Lalitaditya's campaign in Kabul-Tokharistan. Whatever it may be, this Sun Temple is no doubt the crowning jewel of the contemporary architecture.

The massive foundation of the Martand Mandir is built on the Karewas (silted ground). With the huge mountain in the background, the massiveness of the temple is even more appealing to the eye. The main temple stands at the centre of the 220 x 142 feet wide area.You need to climb the tall steps to reach its inner mandap. Constructed with geometric precision, the temple has beautiful carved images of deities such as Sun, Shiva, etc on all the four walls. The main temple is enclosed by huge walls built with large recesses and divided into 86 pillars. Looking from the entrance on the west, one is confronted by the great size of the temple. There is a large *kund* or water tank in the central yard.

However, the ruins that have survived the vagaries of time are a treat to the eyes due to their sheer size. The temple is symbolic of Lalitaditya's artistic tastes and his affection for massive constructions as well as love for creation. Even today, it has the power to transport the viewer into the amazing life and times of Lalitaditya.

Lalitpur

According to Kalhana, while this king was on his *digvijaya*, an architect of his constructed a town named Lalitpur. However, he had to face the king's displeasure. Later,the king built an Aditya temple in Lalitpur and granted the entire income from all the towns in Kanyakubja to this temple for its upkeep. (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 186-187)

This town may have been a twin city of Parihaspur.But it has not been possible to fix its location reliably as yet. Some scholars believe that the present Latpur or Tehipora could be the ancient Lalitpur.But in the absence of archaeological evidence, nothing can be said with certainty.

Nevertheless, the reason Lalitaditya got upset by the creation of this town was perhaps that it was named after him. He had not named the new capital after him as well. His anger seems to have abated later.

Other creations

Kalhana tells us that when Lalitaditya decided to go on the Kanauj campaign, he created a town at the place, where he resolved to come back victorious from it. That town was named Sunishchitpur. When he came back from the victorious campaign, he built another town called Darpitpur. However, this information is possibly fictitious. Kalhana also says that the king established Phalpur, where he bought fruits and Parnotsanagar, where he bought tree leaves. It is difficult to make any firm statement about Sunishchitpurand Darpitpur. It may be Kalhana's imagination. Though the same can be said about Phalpur, Stein has fixed its location near the confluence of Jhelum and Sindhu close to Parihaspur. Of course, no archaeological evidence was found there. Parnotsa, according to some scholars, could be Poonch.Poonch has been linked with Parnotsa even before Lalitaditya.So, it is difficult to believe that Lalitaditya had established a town of that name.

Lalitaditya's wife Chakramardika had established Chakrapurnagar.It was a town of 7,000 houses, according to Kalhana. The possible location of even this town cannot be traced now.

Kalhana informs us that besides these, Lalitaditya and his people had built many other buildings, temples and viharas. Chankuna's brother-in-law Ishanchandra got his wealth by the grace of cobra Takshak and built a huge vihara. A teacher named Bhappat built the Bhappateshwar temple. In Hushkpur (today's Ushkur), Lalitaditya installed ShriMukhswami and built a large vihara and a stupa there. He also built the stone temple of Jyeshtheshwar at the same location.He donated several villages for its upkeep. He also built a Vishnu temple at Lokapunya town and donated villages for its upkeep.

He had built a temple for Lord Nrusimha in Strirajya. The idol in this temple had been fitted with magnets above and below,due to which the idol remained suspended midair.

It is possible that many of these temples and viharas were built during Lalitaditya's lifetime. Looking at the damage the Martand Mandir and Parihaspur

have sustained over the period, the wooden edifices, so natural to Kashmir, would have easily perished completely over the time. Barring edifices like Jyeshtheshwar temple, where Kalhana clearly mentions it was built using stones, the others may have been made from wood. This, of course, is merely a guess but quite plausible considering Lalitaditya's passion to create edifices.

Chinese traveller Ou-k'ong has recorded the close relationship Lalitaditya had with the Turkish people. According to him, there were two viharas in Kashmir, which were built by Yeli Tegin (Turkish prince, possibly having links with Kabul) and Quatun (Turkish queen), respectively. Besides, Ou-k'ong notesthat the royal guests from Tokharistan visited Kashmir regularly.[5]Lalitaditya had already cemented his political relations with the Turks by marrying their princess Ishan Devi.So, it is possible that his relations and ministers from that country visited his land regularly.

Lalitaditya's public works

Even while being busy achieving victories and building edifices, Lalitaditya was ever so careful about the welfare of his subjects. Where the villages were located at a height, therefore faced issues in getting water, he installed rope machines and waterwheels on Jhelum and also by constructing canals to supply water to such villages for farming. Kalhana mentions one such place called Chakrapur on the banks of Jhelum, where such systems were installed (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 191). Chakrapur is identified with today's Tsakdar, a place in the Anantnag district, near Bijbehara (Vijayeshwar). He also built dams on rivers.

Lalitaditya, who established towns, couldnot have ignored building roads. For the smooth movements of the army, he must have built roads linking Kashmir valley with the rest of the world anew.Obviously, these roads were useful in increasing trade as well.

During his brilliant career, even the then powerful and expansionist country like Tibet could not dare attack Kashmir. The Kashmiri people enjoyed a peaceful and rich life during Lalitaditya's tenure. People used to participate enthusiastically in various festivals and celebrations. Lalitaditya himself had started an annual festival called 'Sahsrabhakta', according to Kalhana. In this festival, every day, one lakh Brahmins were given rice grains and money. Kalhana has also given a story about the inception of this festival.

Since scholars from countries far and wide came to Kashmir for higher education, during Lalitaditya's tenure, Kashmir not only maintained its status as the knowledge centre, it also enhanced it. In the final phase of Lalitaditya's reign, Chinese monk Ou-k'ong stayed in Kashmir for four years.His writings during the time show that Kashmir was an important seat of Buddhism as well.

Lalitaditya was liberal. He did not discriminate between deities Shiva and Vishnu. He built Buddha Viharas equally enthusiastically. Chankuna was a Buddhist Turk.

During this time, naturally the trade and commerce activities had prospered. Kashmir's economy was at its peak. Besides, Lalitaditya earned enormous wealth through his various victorious campaigns. In addition, the portion of revenue coming in from the vassals was filling the state's coffers. Moreover, the tax income from the trade routes to Central Asia as a result of Kashmir's control over them was a major source of income for the state.

Of course, the expenses required to keep these routes safe must be very high as well, but Kashmir had that much financial strength. We have seen the description of his huge army of foot soldiers and his cavalry, given by the Tokhari envoy to the Chinese court.

It would have been surprising if the king's liberal attitude didnot influence his subjects. A strong finance, amicable relations between people of all faiths and plenty of opportunities to prosper, encourage creativity, talents and ambitions in the people. This is precisely what happened during Lalitaditya's tenure. Kashmir reached the pinnacle of its glory. A glory not just in terms of victories in war or economic power, but in terms of liberal and tolerant intellectual wealthalso. Lalitaditya was a patron of talents. Not only did he honour scholars, he also invited them from other countries as well. Atrigupta is a case in point. We know that one of Atrigupta's descendants, Abhinavgupta took the intellectual glory of Kashmir to great heights later.

Some ambitious communities in Kashmir also caused troubles from time to time during Lalitaditya's reign. For example, when Lalitaditya was on his last campaign, the Dammars appear to have posed some trouble for him at home. Kalhana records that in his orders sent from abroad, Lalitaditya had instructed strict clamping down of these troublesome Dammars. Lalitaditya said in that order -

"Those wishing this state to be strong must always be very careful about internal troubles because like the Charvakas, we neednot fear the other world.

"It is very difficult to keep a few rich people in the mountainous regions of our state quiet because they have the security of their forts. Therefore, irrespective of their culpability, they should be penalised.

"They should be allowed to keep stocks of food grains only for a year and oxen just enough for farming.

"If wealthier than this much, theseDammars become cruel and strong, and defy royal decrees." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 345-348)

From today's point of view, these instructions may seem harsh but it is truly difficult even now to keep the mountain tribes, who build fortresses for themselves

in the remote areas, under control. Lalitaditya had to consistently take efforts to control Gilgit and Baltistan. Even then, they continued to trouble him with the help of Tibet. In the above case, the Dammars were the citizens of Kashmir.These people have been playing a major role in upstaging incumbent kings as well as installing new kings using their power and money, during the power struggles in Kashmir's history. In this backdrop, Lalitadityaissued such strong orders only after the Dammars created nuisance and attempted to challenge the throne. He was well aware of his royal duty to remain alert about internal revolts. He mentions Charvaka for this reason. He wasnot the kind of kings who thought about the concepts heaven and hell and life after death.

Lalitaditya's socio-political views become clear from his last message.It proves him to be a political thinker as well. We shall review his thoughts later.

In short, Lalitaditya built an empire complete with knowledge power, artistic interests and economic strength, the reason it proves inspiring even today.

Other events in Lalitaditya's life

Kalhana has described some events that throw light on Lalitaditya's life. Though we do not have any other source to check their veracity, we have to take note of these stories. They also show Kalhana's impartiality. It is indeed commendable that he isnot afflicted by the common vice of the court poets to eulogise the king under any circumstances. Besides, in these events are hidden many historical facts. Hence, they prove useful in understanding the overall persona of Lalitaditya.

Kalhana says,

"Maybe because of the influence of Kali or the arrogance of power, but this king too erred at times.

"One day, when he was in Parihaspur and in an inebriated state in the company of his wives, the king said to his ministers-

"If Pravarpur constructed by Pravarsena is as beautiful as Parihaspur, burn it down.

"The ministers couldnot disobey him.So, they lit up haystacks at a place called Vatulanak.

"Looking at the fire from the terrace of his bedroom,the elated king started laughing aloud.

"Just as a person afflicted by an eye-malady sees moon and other luminous things double, virtuous people when afflicted by anger and envy, start seeing others unfavourably.

"If it werenot so, why would this king, who had himself built many new towns, find only the town built by Pravarsena more beautiful?

"When the king became sober, he was saddened by his sin of burning a town to ashes and started sighing. His long and hot sighs were like the smoke emanating from the fire of his pain.

"Fire emanating from the hollow of an old tree burns the whole tree down. Likewise is the condition of those who are consumed by a secret pain in their heart.

"Seeing his pitiable condition in the morning, his ministers calmed him down by narrating the happenings of the previous night.

"The king became happy when he learnt that Pravarpur wasnot burnt down.He felt like a person, who had dreamt of the death of his son, but found him alive in the morning.

"He immediately praised the minister and decreed that the orders he issued when intoxicated should never be followed.

"Some royal servants, for the lure of their selfish interests and comforts, lead their master, who is enjoying this earth like a prostitute but for some time, to undesirable addictions and ends. May they be hated by all! On the other hand, this earth is deemed sanctified by the virtues of such high-minded servants, who prevent their master from taking an undesirable path without caring for their own lives." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 309-321)

The above story is obviously a moral story.It is not improbable in Lalitaditya's life. Alcohol is usually not a taboo for the brave warriors.There are many instances of irrational decisions taken under its influence, which have even led to the fall of a kingdom. The important point here is that though he issued undesirable orders in his inebriated state, he had remorse after becoming sober. Instead of being angry because his orders werenot followed, he felt proud of his ministers. On their part, the ministers too didnot obey the king's orders blindly because they knew it was wrong.They were prepared to face his wrath. The king was so great that he told his people not to follow his inappropriate orders.

This shows Lalitaditya's nature in a different light. The story gives an idea about the rational thinking of his administration as well. Through this,Kalhana also holds Lalitaditya against his mistakes. To err is human but not to accept it is foolish. The story confirms that Kalhana is the first Indian impartial historian, though he didnot possess the modern outlook about history writing.

Kalhana has also mentioned another undesirable action by Lalitaditya. Even in this story, there are some historical facts hidden. The story goes like this -

"This king, who was greater than even Indra, committed another unbecoming act.

"In spite of assuring protection to the king of Gaud kingdom before Parihaskeshav, he had that king killed at the hands of a spy named Teekshna at Trigami.

"The servants of that king made ultimate sacrifices by fighting valiantly for him and surprised everyone.

"The servants of the Gaud king entered Kashmir under the pretext of visiting the temple of goddess Sharada and besieged this temple at the very heart of the town.

"When the priests saw these soldiers entering the temple with the intention of an invasion in the absence of Lalitaditya, they shut the doors and protected the idol of Parihaskeshav.

"In their eagerness to show their prowess, the soldiers mistakenly barged into the Ramaswami temple and destroyed the idol in it completely.

"They shredded it into fine particles and scattered the powder in all directions. At that time, the soldiers of Srinagar attacked them and killed them at different places.

"Drenched in blood, those dark-skinned soldiers of the Gaud king looked like the boulders of the Anjan Mountain daubed in red liquid mineral." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 322-329)

Kalhana goes on to add that the Gaud soldiers displayed extraordinary loyalty through their sacrifice of their lives for their king. Kalhana also says that the Parihaskeshav was saved by the sacrifice of Ramaswami in the dark storm of the Gaud soldiers. Informing us that the Ramaswami temple is still seen deserted and adds that the sound of the glory of the Gaud soldiers is seen reverberating in the entire world.

This story is important in many ways and needs to be analysed independently. Besides being factual, the story corroborated the historical fact that Lalitaditya had conquered the Gaud kingdom after defeating Yashovarman. In Kalhana's opinion the act of killing the Gaud king by a spy even after assuring him protection was unbecoming on the part of Lalitaditya. We need to analyse the incident even while respecting Kalhana's opinion.

The first question is when did Lalitaditya assure protection to the Gaud king before Parihaskeshav and why was it needed? If we assume that Parihaspur's construction was completed roughly in 740 AD, Lalitaditya was not present in Kashmir during 738 to 744 AD. Yashovarman was defeated in 740 AD.Lalitadityatook over Magadh and Gaud by 741 AD. Having become a vassal, the Gaud king wouldnot need the assurance of protection.

The assurance of protection was given when Lalitaditya was present in his capital. TheParihaskeshav temple is also in the capital. This means the assurance must have been given either sometime during 744 to 747 AD or 750 to 756/57 AD.

Why? What had the Gaud king done to make him seek protection from Lalitaditya? That too, by travelling all the way from his kingdom to Kashmir?

The Gaud king must have committed some offence.Perhaps it was defiance against Kashmir's control and an attempt to become independent. Therefore, he must have been called to or forcibly compelled to come to Kashmir to explain. It is then possible that for the fear of being killed in the court or in the capital out of contempt, the Gaud king sought protection from Lalitaditya in front of the latter's favourite deity Parihaskeshav. Lalitaditya complied with this request as well. Then he must have left for the campaign against Tibet because he was far away from the capital according to Kalhana, when the Gaud king was killed.

In this context, what was the urgency of killing the Gaud king?

Just like his administration, Lalitaditya's intelligence department was highly efficient as we can see from this important incident. Of course, he wouldnot have been able to control such faraway places without this department. After Lalitaditya's return from the victory in Madhya Desha, some of his vassals may have tried to become independent again, including the Gaud ruler. Even after coming to Kashmir and securing an assurance of protection, this ruler may have been engaged in some conspiracy with the help of his associates. The possibility of the troublesome Dammars planning a revolt by joining hands with him also cannot be ruled out.Kalhana doesnot go into the reasons behind this case because perhaps they hadnot reached him. No ruler keeps a record of his intrigues and preventive measures. It is obvious, however, that there must be something serious behind having the Gaud king killed by the spy.

When Kalhana says that he was killed at Trigami near Srinagar, there is a contradiction in it. First he says, "The servants of the Gaud king entered Kashmir under the pretext of visiting the temple of goddess Sharada and besieged this temple at the very heart of the town." This indicates that the servants and soldiers accompanying the Gaud king were all killed, necessitating a new unit of soldiers to come from Gaud, who entered Kashmir and attacked the temple.

Then Kalhana says, "With the king already dead and the journey back home so long, the Gaud soldiers displayed exemplary loyalty in that difficult situation. Even Lord Brahma couldnot have shown such an example." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 332) It indicates that while the Gaud king was killed, his soldiers were alive. Hence the contradiction.

What is the truth then? The spy Teekshna killed the Gaud king at Trigami alone. There was no fight there. The spy secretly killed the king and vanished. When they learned about the killing, the Gaud soldiers must have been incensed and must have realised that even their lives were in danger. In that confused, yet outraged mental state, they may have decided to destroy the Parihaskeshav temple, in which Lalitaditya had assured protection to their master.

Though destruction of a temple wouldnot have given them any satisfaction of revenge but they did take that irrational decision. This act of theirs was anything but an "extraordinary loyalty" as described by Kalhana.

However, it is true that moral values are relative to time. The revenge-seeking Gaud soldiers attacked the Ramaswami temple mistaking it for Parihaskeshav temple. This attack was most likelyat night. They barged into the Ramaswami temple and destroyed the idol in it completely. Then they shredded it into fine particles and scattered the powder in all directions. Later, the soldiers of Srinagar attacked them and killed them at different places as they were escaping.

Shankar Pandit has given a strange logic in his preface to *Gaudavaho* in this respect. According to him, the Gaud soldiers and their king must have been Buddhists, else they wouldnot have attacked a Hindu temple and destroyed the idol of a Hindu deity. This logic has no basis. There are umpteen examples of a Hindu king destroying Hindu temples and monasteries during his attack on another Hindu king.

Most recently, in 1791, some of the Maratha soldiers under Parshurambhau Patwardhan had looted the Shringeri Math and stolen the holy stick and wooden pot of Shankaracharya among other things. Though this was condemned in the Pune court, it is a fact.

An army needs money. Monasteries and temples being rich, faith, devotion and religion bow before wealth. Therefore, the logic that the Gauds may not have been Hindu cannot be accepted. On the contrary, looking at the prevailing social situation, we see thatthe religious fanaticism had not yet born in India. The architects designing the Buddhist-Hindu edifices could be belonging to any faith. The Gaud soldiers chose the Parihaskeshav temple to avenge the killing of their king because it was here that their king was assured protection. Their ire was borne by the Ramaswami temple instead. Nevertheless, this was an irrational act because they couldnot hope to achieve anything but self-destruction through it.

Though the story of the Ramaswami idol is somewhat fantastic, it is quite factual.

Kalhana says,

"Once the ace horse rider king went to a forest alone to train an untrained horse.

"At that lonely place, he saw a beautiful woman sing and another beautiful woman dance.

"He continued riding his horse all the time. After finishing their song and dance, the two women paid respect to the place and left.

"After observing them for a few days from his horse, one day he enquired with them.

"They said, 'We are the Devdasi dancers from the nearby town Shuravardhan.We dance at this spot every day as per our mother's instructions and according to our family tradition.

"'This tradition has been followed in our family since ancient times.But neither we nor anyone else knows the reason behind this tradition.'

"The king was surprised with this.The next day, he had the spot dug up.

"When the spot was dug very deep and the soil from that was removed, they found two very ancient, dilapidated temples. Their doors were closed.

"On opening the doors, they found two idols of Keshav. As per the text carved on their bases, these idols were installed by Ram and Laxman.

"The king then built a stone temple near the Hari Mandir in Parihaspur and installed the Ramaswami idol there.

"Queen Chakramardika Devi then asked the king for the idol of Laxmanswami and installed it in a new temple constructed near the Chakreshwar temple." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 265-276)

This reveals the origin of the Ramaswami idol destroyed by the Gaud soldiers. A town, temple or edifice built within the flood zone of a river in Kashmir could easily get buried in the silt and forgotten over time. These twin temples could very well be from among them. However, the possibility of the memories of such buried temples remaining alive in the families of the Devdasisthrough continued dancing at the spot cannot be negated.Their profession was to dance in temples. Here we see the curious mind and logical thinking of Lalitaditya. He enquired with the dancers and applied his logic to deduce that there must be a temple at that spot some time ago. He had the spot excavated (though the excavation science was not even born then) and unearthed the temples gone under the silt. Then he installed the ancient idols in new temples, of which the idol of Ramaswami got destroyed at the hands of the Gauds.

There may be some variance in the details, but the probability of the story being true is high. From Kalhana's narration, apparently the same idol of Ramaswami was destroyed by the Gauds.

External political situation

We can see that Lalitaditya remained in his capital to look after the affairs of the state for at least six to seven years after 750 AD. The other contemporary sources do not show that he was required to undertake any campaigns against Tibet, Gilgit or any other place. Of course, we cannot say that this means there was peace here.

The political situation in Central Asia was stormy. Tibet had joined hands with the Abbasid Caliphate.It had started posing a challenge to the Tang Empire. It

culminated in a war between the Arabs and the Chinese forces in the Talas River valley north of Tokharistan in 751 AD.

This war was for the supremacy over the region around Sir Darya River. Today, the river Talas flows through Kirgyzstan-Kazakhstan. The war continued for several days. China was completely defeated due to the defection of some Turkish tribes against it. After this war, China's control over the Tarim valley was also lost completely asChina had to immediately face the Lushan revolt back home. The local vassals of the Tang dynasty either became independent or joined the Arab forces. The Islamisation of the Turks is believed to have begun after this war.[5]

After the war, possibly even Tokharistan faced troubles from the Arabs. We do not know whether it was indeed so.If yes, what exactly did Lalitaditya do in that respect?

Around the same time, Tibet had to contend with its internal issues, including various epidemics. The conflicts between China and Tibet had begun in 740 AD, which continued till 756 AD.

In the meanwhile, in 755 AD, King Me Angtsom died and his son Trisong Detsun came to power. He was a staunch supporter of Buddhism. In his tenure, Tibet saw viharas and stupas getting constructed. He also invited several scholars from India. They included the Kashmiri scholars. Till 763 AD, he appears to have adopted a peace policy. Tibet did not undertake any adventure in Gilgit after 755 AD is a reflection of its changed religious policy. In 763 AD, however, Trisong sent an army of two lakh soldiers to the China border and attacked the Chinese capital by defeating its forces. The then Tang king Daizong was forced to flee his capital.

In the meanwhile, after its complete rout at the hands of the Arabs, since 755 AD China remained embroiled in a very serious revolt. King Heun Tsang had to kill his beloved mistress Yang Guifei under pressure from the rebels. Since the An Lushan revolt continued in spite of that for many more years, China had no time to look into either the external issues or even its old vassal states.

Naturally, Lalitaditya would have had an eye on this political situation all around him. It would have been surprising if he had not been ready to exploit this situation, which had developed rapidly since 755 AD, for the expansion of his kingdom and to win the lands no Kashmiri ruler till then had ever walked on.

Then Lalitaditya left for the far-out campaign. This was the most dangerous campaign.Before him, no one had ever dared to think about it.

The Uttarapath campaign...!

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Chapter 10

The far-out campaign!

With the surrounding political situation having changed completely, a spirited and adventurous king like Lalitaditya, who was ever keen to tread newer territories, couldnot have kept quiet. So far, he had only travelled till Kashgar in the north. Because of China's defeat by the Arabs, Kashgar was now with the Arabs.

Due to the bloody revolt of An Lushan since 755 AD, China had recalled its army from that region as well. Because of the change of regime and religious policy, Tibet's expansionism had virtually stopped.So. Lalitaditya thought of entering Uttarapath and left for that region.

Kalhana says,

"To see the land the other kings couldn't, he entered the vast Uttarapath with his army. To test him, guardian angels such as Kubera sent many warrior demons to fight him. He defeated all of them." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 337-338)

Uttarapath is the Tarim valley region beyond the Himalayas. The Taklamakan desert falls in this region. Regions such as Khotan, Kashgar, Yarkand,Niya, etc lie south of Uttarapath.To the north are regions/towns including Aksu, Kuchha, Turfan and Gao Chang. This valley is a part of the present day Xinjiang province of China.

Though Indian people had always had a strong attraction about this region, not having seen it ever, their information about it was based on hearsay and was fantasy filled. Kalhana was no exception to this.But he seems to know that this is a desert. His description could be based on the information revealed by those accompanying Lalitaditya,who could come back alive. This region being far out and far from usual contact, Kalhana augments his narration with fantasy when he describes this last campaign of Lalitaditya. No part of this information is accurate. However, we would build a coherent picture by dealing with the anomalies and anachronisms in it.

Kalhana's story briefly goes like this -

"OnceLalitaditya was leaving for his *digvijaya* on his elephant.A severely wounded and punished man came and fell before him. He said to Lalitaditya, 'I'm the trusted minister of a kingdom near Siktasindhu. When I suggested to our king that he should surrender to you, he did this to me.' Lalitaditya then decided to punish the said ruler.He took the wounded minister with him on his campaign after treatment of the man.Along the way, the man said he knows a shorter route to his kingdom.He also said that they would have to carry enough water with them due to unavailability of water in the intermediate region. He promised that his relatives

would meet them on the way. They would not inform the enemy king about Lalitaditya's arrival.So, he could surprise the enemy with a sudden attack. Convincing Lalitaditya thus, the man led him and his army into a desert. Within a fortnight, the water stock finished but they continued to march ahead. Soon, the army became desperate due to thirst. When the man was confronted, he revealed his true colours.He said, 'I brought you into this jaw of death without bothering for my own life, just to keep my king safe. This is not an ordinary desert.It is a deadly, arid sea of sand. Hearing this, Lalitaditya struck his spear confidently into the ground and a river started flowing from there. Then he had the ears and nose of that minister cut. He ran away to his king. Lalitaditya followed him to his kingdom and did the same to his king." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 277-305)

The above story is no less than a fantasy novel. It is the result of the information about many events not reaching Kalhana factually. Nonetheless, the fact that Lalitaditya had reached the region known as 'Sea of Sand'.There were towns around water bodies in that area, which comes out of this story.

The Tarim basin is in the Taklamakan desert itself. The Silk Route also passes through this valley. Most of the region south of this river is a cold desert.It faces a severe water shortage. In those days, towns were always built around water bodies. The chief source of water was streams and nullahs or a branch of river Tarim. These city-states were also called the Oasis States due to this. Each such state belonged to a different community or tribe and they constantly warred with each other. China controlled this region for a long time. Numerous Buddhist relics have been found here due to its deep influence over the region.

Translator of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* Sir MarcAurel Stein also researched a lot in this region. He found some wooden plates from fourth century, with royal decrees in Prakrit language carved on them. This is an example of how the Indian languages influenced the administration in such cold desert regions as well. This region was very important for China for its contact with Central Asia and also because the trade routes passed through it. For this reason, China had established its ascendancy over the local city-states.[1]

From Kalhana's information we can guess that Lalitaditya had gone to this Taklamakan desert. Besides, there is no doubt that the desert itself was Uttarapath. Hermann Goetz also concludes thus.He opines that Lalitaditya conquered Tarim valley in his last years. He also insists that while doing this, he also conquered the city-states in the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts and attacked Kuchha and Turfan. In his opinion, this probably happened in 755/56 AD.[2]

Though most scholars have already accepted Goetz's opinion, Tansen Sen refuted it. Basically, he doesnot accept that Lalitaditya had gone to south Hindukush or the Taklamakan desert at all. In refuting Goetz's conclusions, he has argued as follows -

1. Goetz has assumed that Lalitaditya's career came to an end in 756/57 AD, which is completely wrong.The correct year is 760/61 AD.

2. There are many contemporary sources providing information about the socio-political situation in the Taklamakan region.The accounts of Buddhistbhikkhus Hyecho in 724/25 AD and Ou-k'ong during his stay in Kashmir between 759 and 763 AD are among the important ones. Besides, the records of the Chinese court giving details of the visits to the court by foreign delegations are available. Also, the Tibetan documents found at Dunhuang throw light on Tibet's military movements in the Pamir range.

3. The coins of the Turkish rulers south of Hindukush have been found.They reveal the Turkish rulers and their administrations in that region.

4. None of the above source corroborates Goetz's claims. Therefore, the opinion that Lalitaditya's empire had spread across the Hindukush-Pamir ranges and the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts, is not valid.[3]

5.Lalitaditya attacked Kuchha and Turfan after conquering the city-states in the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts in 755-56 AD as China had withdrawn its army from Central Asia owing to the An Lushan revolt. However, though the withdrawal of Chinese army from these regions is true, before Tibet captured them, China controlled these city-states at least up to 780 AD. Records are available that many of these city-states had sent their troops to help China fight with An Lushan in 757 AD. If Lalitaditya had attacked them at that time, it would have been deemed an attack on China. The Chinese court does not record any such thing. Therefore. Lalitaditya is not likely to have attacked the Chinese troops in Taklamakan and Gobi.

6. Besides, Lalitaditya couldnot have crossed Pamir in 755/56 AD because as soon as China withdrew its army from Gilgit, Tibet had recaptured it. According to the Tibetan court records, Tibet's ascendancy had spread beyond the Gilgit valley. In such a situation, if Lalitaditya had tried to enter Taklamakan by crossing Pamir, the Tibetans would have been alerted.They would have tried to stop him. No such conflict is mentioned in the Tibetan documents however. Therefore, Lalitaditya's military campaign in Hindukush-Pamir-Taklamakan is improbable.[4]

The above opinions are actually based on the misconceptions and misunderstandings of these scholars. Based on the mere mention of 'Sea of Sand' by Kalhana, Goetz vehemently claims that Lalitaditya attacked Kuchha and Turfan after conquering the city-states in the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts.Tansen Sen refuting all the opinions of Goetz presents some illogical and irrelevant evidences. They need to be scrutinised.

Goetz has assumed that Lalitaditya's career came to an end in 756/57 AD. According to Kalhana, Lalitaditya ruled for 36 years, 7 months and 11 days. The veracity of this is unknown.Yet, we have to take that as base. If we assume that

Lalitaditya came to power in 724/25 AD, with this period of rule, we have to accept that he ruled till at least 761 AD, in which case, we can say that Tansen Sen's opinion is valid.

But Tansen Sen has cited the diary of Hyecho and notes of Ou-k'ong, both of which are irrelevant. This is because Hyecho came to India before Lalitaditya's ascension to throne, in 723 AD. He returned to China by the Silk Route in 729 AD. At the time,Lalitaditya was fighting with the Arabs. The events of that time in Central Asia and those after 755 AD have no connection whatsoever.Therefore, Hyecho's notes with regard to the Uttarapath campaign are irrelevant.

Ou-k'ong came to Kashmir in 759 AD and stayed here for four years. His information is of the times when the political situation was rapidly changing.Its dates are from different years at different geographical locations. When he came to Kashmir in 759 AD, Lalitaditya is unlikely to be present in Kashmir.It is impossible for Ou-k'ong to know what was happening in distant Tarim basin. It should also be noted that he wasnot a political traveller but a bhikkhu. Both Hyecho and Kong being Buddhist bhikkhus, their emphasis is on information about Buddha Dhamma and places related with it. As such, their information was casually recorded and often based on hearsay. One needs to use his judgment while assuming it valid as evidence. Sen doesnot appear to have done that.

Goetz assumed that Lalitaditya undertook his Uttarapath campaign in 755-56 AD.Sen got the opportunity to refute his opinions because his wrong assumption that Lalitaditya got this opportunity due to An Lushan's rebellion. However, while doing this, Sen has not taken care to change the logically probable time of the campaign. He should have taken note of the fact that the Uttarapath or Taklamakan campaign could have been of much later time. Hence, his statement 'Lalitaditya couldnot have crossed Pamir in 755/56 AD because as soon as China withdrew its army from Gilgit, Tibet had recaptured it' is also baseless.

Basically, Sen has not even considered the fact that in 755 AD, there was a change of regime in Tibet.The new ruler Trisong Detsun had implemented completely new policies. His statement that, since Lalitaditya did not cross the Pamir range in 755-56 at all, no record of any conflict with Kashmir is found in the Tibetan documents. Therefore. Lalitaditya did not undertake that campaign at all, is pointless. He has also overlooked the fact that let alone keeping control over Gilgit after 755-56 AD, Tibet never had complete control over it even before that.

We cannot deduce that they were vassals as the rulers from that region sent their delegations for goodwill visits. We need to understand that the job of maintaining diplomatic contacts is done by even independent states and not just by vassals.

On the fifth point, Sen's objection is as much baseless as Goetz's original comment is. J Harmatta has attempted to describe the rules based on the

contemporary coins found. Though a commendable effort, one cannot deduce from the coins that the Turkish rulers or Tokharistan werenot the vassals of Kashmir. Irrespective of whose ascendancy they accepted, the vassals, even those of the Arabs, continued to mint their own coins. Therefore, taking numismatic reference in this case does not help.

Sen basically tries to show that China was very powerful.But we have seen that that is far from the contemporary reality. We are going to have to think about Lalitaditya's Uttarapath campaign in this backdrop.

Even though there are discrepancies in Kalhana's narration, he is honest in accepting that he doesnot know the exact details of Lalitaditya's death. Yet, he is confident that this death or whatever happened to Lalitaditya, happened far away from Kashmir, that too in Uttarapath. It is unbelievable that Kalhana would be ambiguous about the death of such a great emperor. Therefore, we have to assume the statement that Lalitaditya entered the till-date unknown region, along with his army to be true.

We have to also accept that even Goetz's analysis is exaggerated. He hasnot offered any evidence to his statement that Lalitaditya attacked Kuchha and Turfan after conquering the city-states in the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts.

In that case, what must have happened actually? And more importantly, when exactly did Lalitaditya set out for the Uttarapath campaign?

Going by Kalhana's account, Lalitaditya's career ended in 760-61 AD. Though Kalhana shows the campaign to be successful for some time, it appears to have failed in the end because the king never returned from it. When the ministers back home sent a messenger,as the king did not return for a long time,to find out about his wellbeing. The messenger brought back the royal instructions that had a kind of finality to them, indicating that the king didnot want to return ever and march victoriously to the end of the world.

China was completely embroiled in the An Lushan revolt since 755 AD and also suffered great internal damage. It lost to the Arabs in the war in Talas River valley in 751. Immediately after this war,it had to face the An Lushan revolt, therefore it lost its control over the Tarim valley as well as the Turkish tribes changed sides. In spite of this, when Sen says that China controlled Tarim valley till 780 AD, it is strange. It is the same in case of Tibet as well. Tibet's stance changed due to the change in the regime in 755 AD. To see the effects of these changes and to judge its future, sometime had to be given.

Lalitaditya did that. He planned his Uttarapath campaign after much thought. Under any circumstance, this campaign could not kick off before 758 AD. That much time was needed to understand the stance of the new king in Tibet and to know the future of the revolt in China. China had already withdrawn its forces from Tarim valley and the city-states in Taklamakan and Gobi. At the time of An

Lushan's revolt, troops from some of the city-states may have gone to help China.But these may be the ones closer to the Chinese mainland. This is because they must have been dependent on China in many respects. Maybe Lalitaditya never went to that side or even if he did, where would a power, which was herself struggling for survival, find time to take note of his victories?China no more controlled all the parts of Taklamakan or the Tarim valley. Many of the city-states in the west were already with the Arabs. We cannot afford to overlook this historical reality.

Moreover, this campaign of Lalitaditya appears to have run for a mere 2-3 years. Having died during it, it is obvious that his victories in Uttarapath were short-lived. However, even so, it is important that he had achieved victories in that region.He continued marching on in his quest to achieve more victories. Ultimately,he met his maker during the campaign. This opinion is closer to the reality.

It is obvious that Lalitadityahad to cross Gilgit on his Uttarapath campaign. Since the Tibetan army had no existence there, there was no question of Tibet getting alarmed. China's rule in the Tarim valley was over.The city-states had mostly become independent. In the west, city-states like Kashgar had succumbed to the Arab rule. The massive uninhabited Taklamakan desert lies to the north of Khotan-Niya. This desert had to be crossed or circumvented by travelling along the mountain ranges surrounding the valley to reach Kuchcha or Turfan. Since China no longer ruled this region, attack on it would not have been deemed attack on China at all.Even if it was, there was no chance China could have acted because of its internal strife.

Overall, after embarking on the campaign in 758 AD, Lalitadityaprobably conquered the kingdoms of Niya and Keriya first. The story of a devious man leading Lalitaditya to the sea of sand narrated by Kalhana is impossible to be completely true.However, the possibility of his army losing the way is always there. Maybe some local people misguided him.He still managed to reach some city-state to the westwith a water body nearby. Then he may have taken over that city as well. We can deduce as much from this story.

However, he had lost contact with his capital as he was travelling through the desert. Not having heard from him, his ministers grew anxious.They sent a messenger to him. This messenger met the king.Gathering news and final instructions from him, he returned to the capital. The messenger must have taken a lot of time to find the king. Perhaps, along with the king's instruction, the messenger also narrated to the minister the story of how a minister of a kingdom misled Lalitaditya into the desert. This same story must have travelled over time to reach Kalhana with addition of the element of fantasy to it. We can now say that

Kalhana then inserted it in his narration to underscore Lalitaditya's mystical greatness.

Kalhana further says,

"When they did not hear from him for a long time, his ministers sent a messenger to him. On his return, the messenger said -

"His Majesty said, 'What sort of attachment is this on your part that you want me to return having come to this country?

"'I am achieving victories on newer regions here. What greater work is waiting for me back home?

"'The river having left its origin shall ultimately merge in the ocean. How to decide the limit or time for the journey of a king, who has likewise left his kingdom for victory?

"'Therefore, O ministers, I tell you some basic principles to manage the kingdom in my absence. Please run the state according to them without any hindrance and without a blemish.'" (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 340-344)

Lalitaditya also issued some orders, along with this message. We have already discussed the instructions regarding the Dammars. The other instructions are as below -

"Like the urban people, if these bucolic people (Dammars) get good clothes, good food, ornaments, beautiful women, good houses and good horses or if the king arrogantly ignores the security of his forts, if the royal servants start being injudicious in their actions, if soldiers are recruited from only one region, if the Kayasthas come together through marriages and if the king adopts a Kayastha mentality, be sure that the misfortune of the citizens is around the corner."(Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 349-352)

This instruction by Lalitaditya clarifies his political strategy. Even Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* has suggested that the king should ensure that the chiefs of the various professional guilds (shreni) do not come together. Lalitaditya's army consisted of soldiers from regions other than Kashmir. He knew that when the number of soldiers from the same region increases, it could lead to a revolt. Lalitaditya's anxiety that if the Kayasthas (government officials, clerks, accountants, etc) start intermarrying, it would become a caste-like organisation.They could dictate the king ultimately, which is not misplaced. We see today how the bureaucracy lords over the elected representatives of the people. Lalitaditya had recognised this danger. Besides, he seems to be particular about the king not adopting the attitude of a Kayastha. The ultimate aim of all this is the welfare of the people. There is no doubt that this seemingly harsh order is to ensure that the situation leading to the citizens' misfortune should not arise at all.

Lalitaditya has also conveyed who should succeed him. Stepbrothers Kuvalayapida and Vajraditya were both Lalitaditya's sons.However, by nature and

temperament,they were as different as chalk and cheese.Lalitaditya was well aware of this. He told the messenger, “My elder son should be coronated.If he is found lacking in the qualities appropriate for a king, he should be dismissed. Overcome by grief even if he commits suicide or leaves the country, no one should remorse. Donot install my younger son as the new king.If he does become the king for some reason, follow his orders and protect him.” Along with this message, Lalitaditya also told his ministers to train his youngest grandson Jayapida to become like his grandfather.

This wasnot just the final order of Lalitaditya.It was, in fact, a declaration that he was abdicating the throne.He didnot intend to return to the kingdom ever. Kalhana’s description of Lalitaditya’s career ends here. Lalitaditya may have continued to fight wars, achieve victories or face defeats for some more time.But no news about him seems to have reached Kashmir ever afterwards. For this reason, Kalhana narrates various hearsay stories about Lalitaditya’s death.

However, a few things are clear here. Lalitaditya had entered the Tarim valley by crossing Pamir. Before he met the messenger from home, he had even achieved some victories.He wanted to continue till the world’s end. We do not have to reject this campaign purely because there is no contemporary information available about it. This is because the contemporary powers were embroiled in their private issues at the time. Lalitaditya was trying to fill the political vacuum that had developed in the Tarim valley.

In fact, he had developed an unbridled curiosity to traverse ever new lands instead of establishing his control over the regions he had won. He wanted his victorious tradition to continue unbroken.But he didnot want to settle down in any one place. Else, he wouldnot have conveyed through the messenger his wish never to return to his kingdom. This means in this campaign, his thirst for power had eventually perished.He was possessed by the idea of continuing his forward journey, conquering the unknown lands. This is what he did…

He marched forward, never to return.

Tansen Sen’s apprehensions with respect to Lalitaditya’s Uttarapath campaign are as baseless as Goetz’s inability to provide concrete evidence or well-founded logic for his claim of Lalitaditya going up to Turfan by crossing the deserts of Taklmakan-Gobi. Nevertheless, without doubt, Lalitaditya at least traversed the Taklmakan desert and by carrying Kashmir’s flag to the till-then unknown lands, he demonstrated the infinite curiosity of the human mind.

Lalitaditya is called India’s Alexander the Great not just because he died in a foreign land but because of his indomitable spirit of conquering ever newer lands.

Lalitaditya died while on this campaign later. History is silent on the how and why of his death. Even the fate of his army is unknown.

Kalhana says,

"Some say that the king died because of the enormous snowfall in the Aryajak country.

"Some even say he submitted himself to fire when faced with an imminent, inevitable danger to preserve his eternal prestige.

"Some others say, in the Uttarapath,which is beyond the human reach but easily reachable for the divine beings, the king went into the earth, along with his army.

"Just like the story of his astonishing achievements is told, the various wondrous stories about his death are also narrated.

"When the sun sets, some say it drowned in the sea, some say it entered the fire and some say it went to another country. Likewise, many marvellous stories are related about the death of the great men." (Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* 4, 367-371)

It is natural that the death of a phenomenal and great emperor of Kashmir in a remote, unknown land should give rise to various legends. A consistently victorious Lalitaditya, in the final phase of his life, abandons his love for power.He embarks on a journey in an unknown land, purely out of his insatiable curiosity.He meets his end during that journey is befitting to this great man!

Back in Kashmir, the throne abdicated by Lalitaditya was empty. His elder son from wife Kamaladevi, Kuvalayapida, was coronated.He was of ascetic dispensation. Seeking deliverance from the worldly impermanence, he also abdicated the throne and adopted a strict ascetic life. Later, Vajraditya, the younger son,Lalitaditya from his wife Chakramardika, came to the throne. He perpetrated ill practices in the kingdom. He was an alcoholic and was lecherous. He plundered Parihaspur, the town his father had built. He also shifted his capital from that city. He could enjoy the kingship for just seven years, after which he was afflicted by tuberculosis as a result of excessive sex and died. After several kings, finally Vajraditya's younger son Jayapida came to power. He took the advice of his ministers "Be like your grandfather" seriously. Kalhana has described his life like a fabulous novel.

However, not just the Karkotaka dynasty, Kashmir as a whole also did not produce an emperor who could surpass the timeless glory of Lalitaditya again. Like the edifices he created defied time and survived, his victories did too. Not just Kashmir, he created a permanent place for himself in the history of Central and South Asia.

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